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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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We lift the lid on grand prix racing's most controversial year ever P32

Three-time British tin-top champion joins Dan Cammish for new Ford Focus superteam

SUTTON IN MOTORBASE SWITCH FOR 2022 BTCC

Sutton will drive the NAPA Focus

By Matt James

Three-time British Touring Car Championship title winner Ash Sutton will swap to Motorbase Performance next season to drive a Ford Focus alongside Dan Cammish.

It will mark 27-year-old Sutton's return to front-wheel drive for the first time since 2016 and he and his engineer Antonio Carrozza, who is also switching to the team, will be aiming for a hat-trick of sucessive title triumphs as the BTCC enters its new hybrid era.

The attack will be backed by automotive parts firm NAPA, which will also support the sister car of eight-time race winner Cammish.

Sutton, who has inked a multi-year deal, said: "This feels like the start of something very exciting and I am ready for the challenge that lies ahead. [Motorbase] are all a great group of people and just pure racers at heart.

"With a solid pre-season testing plan, and a team-mate like Dan Cammish, allows us to fast track a lot of development required to hit the ground running in the new hybrid era."

Motorbase has also confirmed that Ollie Jackson and Sam Osborne will remain with the Kent-based operation for the 2022 campaign.

The British Touring Car Championship is scheduled to kick off at Donington Park on April 24.

Full story, page 5

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

INSIGHT

THE END OF AN ERA FOR WR CARS

Why the old guard will leave lasting memories p19

INTERVIEW

Q&A: HOW ARI REACHED FOR THE STARS

The Finnish legend Vatanen reflects on a storming career p24

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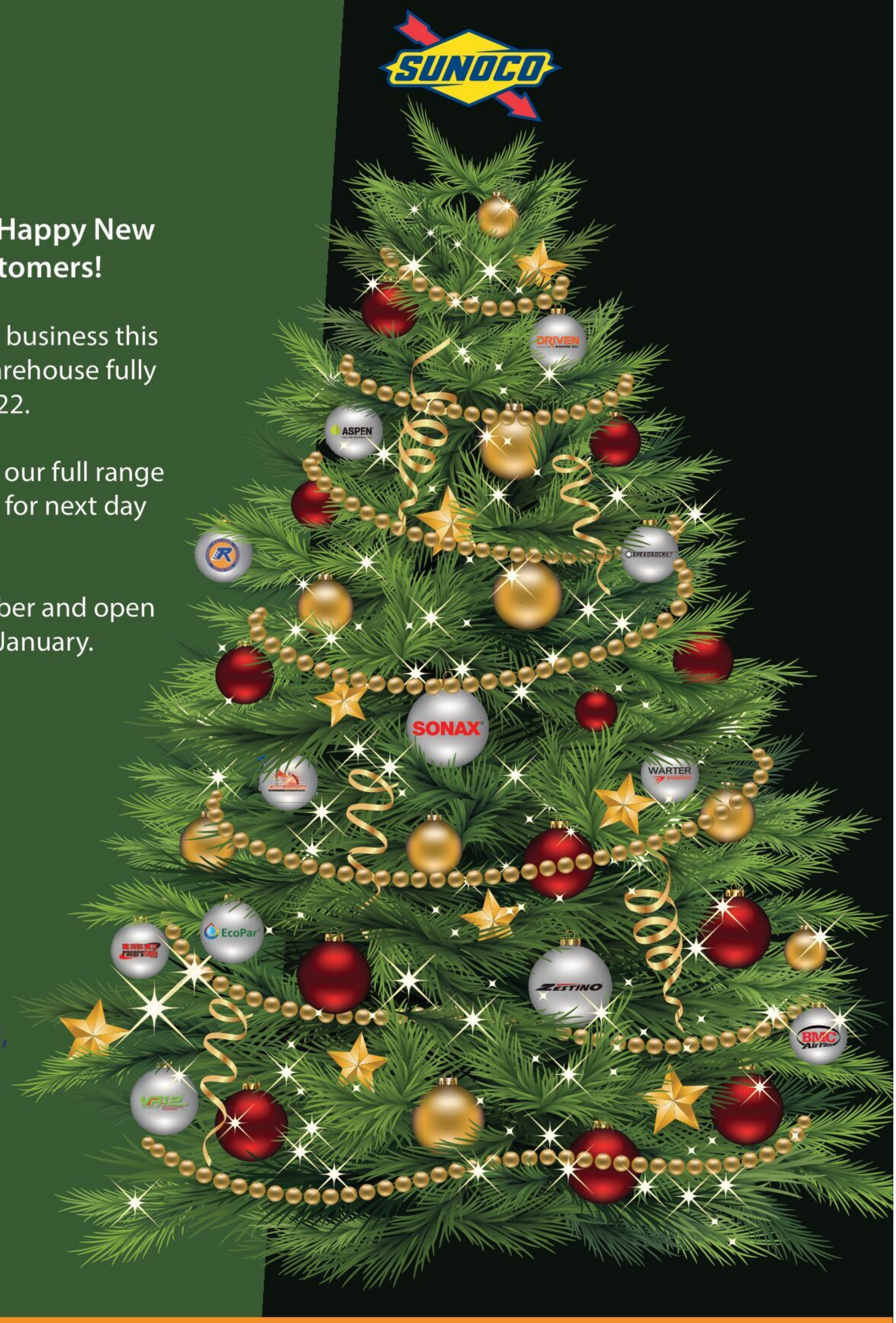

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COMMENT

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, GTWorld Challenge Europe

Hamilton is thinking about his F1 future

WHAT NEXT FOR LEWIS HAMILTON?

Lewis Hamilton was left heartbroken after losing the F1 World championship in Abu Dhabi and that was understandable. His allegation that the result felt "manipulated" has resonated with many.

Stories have begun to emerge over the last few days that the seven-time title-winner might not return to F1. His no-show at the FIA Prize Giving evening certainly added fuel to the fire, as did quotes from his Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff.

While the circumstances aren't quite the same, there is a noticeable echo to the troubles that befell Ayrton Senna after the end of the 1989 season. The McLaren driver even used the word "manipulated" when he described why the title had slipped away that year following a controversial collision with team-mate Alain Prost. Senna threatened to quit the sport. The FIA stood firm.

In the end, Senna came back and won the title in 1990 with McLaren. It was F1's first winter of discontent, but one that seriously dented Senna's love of grand prix racing. Let's hope that Hamilton can regroup, come back and do what Senna did. Lifting the 2022 title would be the best answer to repair the damage that has been done.

James Roberts reflects on the questions that were thrown up during the 2021 Formula 1 season and has some surprising answers to the big issues. It certainly was a year that we will never forget and one that feels like it still has another twist to come, even during the off-season.

Also in this special bumper issue, we have crammed a lot in. Firstly, we select our photographs of the year with some truly stunning pictures from our favourite snappers. While this was a year when the fans were allowed back up close track- and stage-side, the snappers were the ones who have been bringing us the memories from events we could not attend, so we thank them for that.

Nick Garton takes a look back at the history of the World Rally Car, which tackled its last stage in anger in 2021 before the new Rally1 hybrid machines become the top-flight cars in the World championship. It was a set of regulations that provided some of the discipline's most memorable machines and tempted manufacturers to remain committed to the sport, which is key in any area of motor racing.

Ari Vatanen returns to the Motorsport News pages for more readers' questions – and it is highly appropriate, given it is 40 years since he and David Richards lifted the World Rally Championship in a Ford Escort Mk2. Ari takes a wider look at the sport, the battles to stay at the top (and to return from injury) in yet another fascinating interview by Andy Hallbery.

Commentator and MN columnist-at-large David Addison spent a full and varied year behind the microphone and he runs us through his highlights of the last 12 months. Given the selection box of events he has tackles, he is probably in prime slot to tackle our traditional Motorsport News Christmas Quiz, which is on page 42. There is plenty there to keep the grey matter churning over the festive period until the next issue of Motorsport News hits the newsstands, which will be on January 6.

Merry Christmas to all our readers.

Matt James
Editor, Motorsport News
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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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Melvyn Evans Motorsport came, saw and utterly dominated

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The difficult questions of the F1 year

James Roberts tackles the big posers after F1's most dramatic season ever

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David Addison's 2021 motorsporting whirlwind

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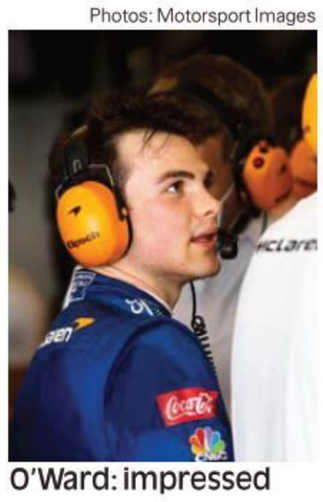
RACING NEWS

MERCEDES FE CHAMP DE VRIES TOPS F1 POST-SEASON TEST

Bottas gets his first Alfa run, Russell is back in a Mercedes while IndyCar star O'Ward enjoys his McLaren debut

Formula E champion de Vries in a Mercedes set the fastest time of the test late on the first day

Photos: Motorsport Images



O'Ward: impressed

By Graham Keilloh

Reigning Formula E champion Nyck de Vries topped the times for Mercedes as Formula 1's 2021 on-track running was completed with a two-day post-season test in Abu Dhabi last week.

Running at the Yas Marina circuit, held in the days after F1's dramatic title finale, was split between rookies in 2021's cars and current F1 drivers sampling the new Pirelli 18-inch tyres in modified mule cars ahead of the tyres' introduction in 2022.

De Vries topped the first day with a fastest lap time of 1m23.194s set in the final half hour. This put him 1.3 seconds of AlphaTauri's Liam Lawson on his first F1 outing.

Robert Shwartzman on the second day, the only runner that day not testing the 18-inch tyres, topped the times for Haas with a 1m25.348s mark.

Other test highlights included Valtteri Bottas getting his first Alfa Romeo F1 run prior to his switch from Mercedes for 2022, Bottas's replacement George Russell getting his latest run in the Mercedes, plus IndyCar star Pato O'Ward enjoying his first outing in a McLaren MCL35M.

O'Ward got the test as a prize for taking his first IndyCar win with the sister Arrow McLaren SP team earlier this year. O'Ward described his first F1 experience as "crazy and insane times 10". McLaren provided further interest by trialling LED wheel cover lights as a hint of future F1 technology.

The next official F1 on-track running will be at the end of February when pre-season testing kicks off at Barcelona.

ABU DHABI F1 TEST

Formula 1 post-season testing times, Yas Marina

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME	LAPS
1	Nyck de Vries	Mercedes	1m23.194s	77
2	Liam Lawson	AlphaTauri	1m24.517s	125
3	Oscar Piastri	Alpine	1m24.523s	131
4	Patricio O'Ward	McLaren	1m24.607s	92
5	Guanyu Zhou	Alfa Romeo	1m25.142s	269
6	Juri Vips	Red Bull	1m25.198s	97
7	Nick Yelloly	Aston Martin	1m25.333s	118
8	Robert Shwartzman	Haas	1m25.348s	130
9	Lando Norris	McLaren	1m25.809s	103
10	Daniel Ricciardo	McLaren	1m26.252s	95
11	Sebastian Vettel	Aston Martin	1m26.379s	134
12	George Russell	Mercedes	1m26.404s	214
13	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri	1m26.451s	149
14	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	1m26.579s	143
15	Robert Shwartzman	Ferrari	1m26.694s	73
16	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	1m26.706s	151
17	Fernando Alonso	Alpine	1m26.940s	148
18	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	1m26.989s	87
19	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	1m27.183s	127
20	Antonio Fuoco	Ferrari	1m27.324s	146
21	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri	1m27.348s	131
22	Logan Sargeant	Williams	1m27.476s	92
23	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	1m27.553s	128
24	Sergio Perez	Red Bull	1m27.991s	118
25	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1m28.013s	124
26	Mick Schumacher	Haas	1m28.499s	100
27	Pietro Fittipaldi	Haas	1m28.622s	123

MERCEDES WITHDRAWS ABU DHABI APPEAL AS FIA LAUNCHES PROBE

Mercedes has withdrawn its appeal over the title-deciding Abu Dhabi Grand Prix after the FIA announced a probe into the controversial ending to Formula 1's 2021 season-closing race.

Figures at Mercedes and other observers were left angry after F1 race director Michael Masi allowed only some backmarkers to unlap themselves under a late-race safety car, and then withdrew the safety car a lap sooner than regulations outline.

This left the freshly tyred Red Bull of Max Verstappen in prime position to claim the race win and World championship by passing Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes on the final lap. Mercedes' post-race protests were dismissed by stewards.

Following discussions by the FIA's World Motor Sport Council in Paris last week, the governing body announced a detailed analysis will be undertaken to look at what happened and learn the required lessons. Mercedes the following day confirmed it therefore no longer needed to pursue its own action.

The team's statement said: "We welcome the decision by the FIA to install a commission to thoroughly analyse what happened in Abu Dhabi and to improve the robustness of rules, governance and decision making in Formula 1.

"Mercedes will actively work with this commission to build a better Formula 1. We will hold the FIA accountable for this process and we hereby withdraw our appeal."

Mercedes decided FIA probe means it doesn't need to pursue appeal

Sulayem has four-year term

MOHAMMED BEN SULAYEM ELECTED FIA PRESIDENT

Mohammed ben Sulayem has been elected to succeed Jean Todt as the president of the FIA after defeating Britain's Graham Stoker in a governing body general assembly vote last week.

Sixty-year-old Sulayem, from United Arab Emirates, received 61.62% of the votes from member clubs and succeeds Todt who served the maximum possible three terms since 2009.

Sulayem has been president of the Emirates Motorsports Organisation since 2005 and was FIA World Motor Sport Council vice president for Middle East. He is a 14-time FIA Middle East rally champion, winning 61 international events from 1983 to 2002. He campaigned under the banner 'FIA for Members', committing to double motorsport participation worldwide, strengthen diversity and inclusion and be a leading opinion former on sustainable mobility.

He is elected for a four-year term, and has appointed Richard Burns' 2001 World Rally champion co-driver Robert Reid as deputy president for sport.

Wolff "will never overcome pain"

WOLFF HOPES "DISILLUSIONED" HAMILTON DOESN'T QUIT F1

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff says he hopes Lewis Hamilton doesn't walk from Formula 1 after both were left "disillusioned" by the recent controversial title finale in Abu Dhabi.

Wolff said: "Lewis and I are disillusioned at the moment. We are not disillusioned with the sport, we love the sport because the stopwatch never lies. But if we break that fundamental principle of sporting fairness and authenticity of the sport, then suddenly the stopwatch doesn't become relevant anymore.

"We will never overcome the pain and the distress that was caused [in Abu Dhabi]. I would very much hope that Lewis continues racing, because he's the greatest driver of all time.

"We will be working through the events over the next weeks and months. As a racer, his heart will say 'I need to continue' because he's at the peak of his game. But we have to overcome the pain that was caused upon him."

OGIER POSSIBLE FOR THIRD TOYOTA AT 2023'S LE MANS

Rally legend Sebastien Ogier could drive in 2023's Le Mans 24 Hours in a third Toyota according to the marque's newly appointed team boss Kamui Kobayashi.

Ogier driving for Toyota recently ended his full-time World Rally Championship career, taking his eighth title, and will contest a part-time WRC programme in 2022.

He also has Le Mans ambitions and drove the GR010 Hybrid in last month's World Endurance Championship rookie test in Bahrain.

Kobayashi said: "I would say it's [a third car] going to be very hard for 2022, because the timing is a bit short. But it could be one of the options for 2023.

"And of course Sebastien when he drove in Bahrain, he was fast. Coming from rallying to asphalt [circuit racing], and sportscars, I would say it's a big difference, but Sebastien was driving pretty well from the beginning. I think that can be quite interesting, if he wants to race Le Mans with our car.

"We'll try to give him more opportunity to drive and let's see if we do a third car; probably yes that can be an opportunity for him."

Rally icon has Le Mans ambition

RACING NEWS

SUTTON AND CAMMISH TO FRONT MOTORBASE'S 2022 BTCC ATTACK

Tin-top champion switches back to front-wheel drive for fresh assault and joins Porsche king

Photo: Motorbase Performance, Jakob Ebrey

Sutton will handle a Ford Focus ST

By Matt James

Reigning champion Ash Sutton will join Porsche Carrera Cup title-holder Dan Cammish in a British Touring Car Championship superteam driving a brace of Motorbase Performance Ford Focus STs in the 2022 competition.

Sutton, who will be joined at the Kent-based operation by his engineer Antonio Carrozza, has moved away from the Laser Tools Racing Infiniti with which he took to the 2021 crown and will return to a front-wheel-drive tin-top for the first time since he drove a Triple Eight Racing MG in 2016.

The 24-time race winner, who has penned a multi-season deal, will pilot a NAPA-branded machine alongside Cammish, whose deal was confirmed on Wednesday last week. Sutton said: "Having got to know [team owner and principal] Pete Osborne more over the last year, I saw the hunger he has to win and his ambition to drive Motorbase in that direction. This is something I love, a new challenge set out with the same goals I personally have.

"Lining up with someone who has a pedigree like Dan really is an exciting prospect. I am sure we will be pushing each other's limits and unlocking more potential within ourselves."

Sutton and Cammish will be joined by two further Motorbase cars, which will be driven by Sam Osborne and Ollie Jackson *(see story, right)*.

Team boss Pete Osborne added: "I really couldn't ask for a better driver line-up. I think we've got a few people's attention; this is an indication of our intent to challenge for the BTCC title in 2022 and beyond. Let's face it, we're not aiming for anything but success with these guys in the driving seat. The team is as strong behind the scenes as it is at the forefront and it's simply buzzing in the workshop."

Jackson and Osborne to complete Blue Oval concern's BTCC line-up

Returning drivers Ollie Jackson and Sam Osborne will complete the four-car line-up for Motorbase Performance in the British Touring Car Championship in 2022.

Race-winner Jackson drove as part of the MB Motorsport-branded Motorbase squad last term and finished 18th in the standings, while Osborne moved to the Kent team for his third full campaign in the top-flight. He was 23rd in the points.

Team boss Pete Osborne, father of Sam, said: "I am so pleased to keep the continuity for Motorbase in both Ollie and Sam. In such a big year for the team, an element of stability is very important for us to push on this season. Ollie will be in his fourth year with the team and has two years' experience of the Ford Focus ST under his belt, along with a wealth of hybrid knowledge. For Sam, it's the first time in his career he gets to drive the same car and with the same team for a second season."

Osborne will return for another year

F4 STAR CRESSWELL GRADUATES TO GB3 WITH CDR

British Formula 4 frontrunner McKenzy Cresswell will step up to the GB3 championship in 2022 competing with Chris Dittmann Racing.

In his first car racing campaign this year, the 15-year-old won six British F4 races on his way to third in the standings.

Cresswell – who was born in the UK but raised in Austin, Texas – has completed several days' post-season testing and joins Branden Oxley at CDR.

Cresswell said: "The aim was always to step up to GB3. Over the past three years CDR has been one of the most successful teams in GB3 with many wins. They also have a collaborative and structured method for developing the car and driver so it's a great fit for me. We've got a test programme in place so we should be well-prepared."

Cresswell: GB3 bid in 2022

We'll meet again: crew will remain unchanged

BRITISH GT CHAMPION BARWELL CONFIRMS UNCHANGED 2022 LINE-UP

British GT drivers' and teams' champion Barwell Motorsport will defend its titles next year with an unchanged line-up of Leo Machitski alongside Dennis Lind plus Adam Balon alongside Sandy Mitchell.

Machitski and Lind took the overall drivers' crown this year with the Lamborghini Huracan-specialist Barwell squad while sister duo Balon and 2020 champion Mitchell placed third. Lind won Motorsport News's readers' vote to become 2021's national racing driver of the year while Barwell took MN's team award.

Barwell has won British GT's GT3 teams' crown in each of the last three seasons as well as taking the drivers' title in the last two campaigns.

Russian Machitski and Dane Lind were the first crew to take the title without a British driver, and in 2022 they will aim to become the first duo to retain the crown. Four-time champion Jonny Adam has retained the title but with different co-drivers.

Team principal Mark Lemmer said: "It's mega for us to keep our existing driver crews for the defence of our British GT titles. It means that we can carry forward the fantastic chemistry and energy that we enjoyed in the team this year."

IRISH TEENAGER COBY HEADS TO AMERICA WITH RVR GT TEAM

Promising Irish teenager Alyx Coby is stepping up to car racing after joining US sportscar team Random Vandals Racing with her race debut set for February at Road Atlanta.

The New Jersey-based RVR squad competes in several GT championships across America, most recently running IndyCar star Conor Daly at the Intercontinental GT Challenge Indianapolis 8 Hour. Coby, 17, will make her sportscar debut on February 18-22 in the American Endurance Racing series double-header of two eight-hour races, driving a BMW M2 CS Racing.

County Kildare's Coby competes in the Senior X30 karting class in Ireland, the UK and mainland Europe and has recently returned from the IAME World Finals in Adria, Italy. RVR team principal Paul Sparta meanwhile has also supported Conor Daly from the age of 17 and is an ally of hockey star and Conor's cousin Nicci Daly's Formula Female that Coby is involved in.

Coby said: "Random Vandals Racing is an amazing environment to be in, with all the support I need to reach my full potential."

Coby will be able to step up to car racing in the USA next year

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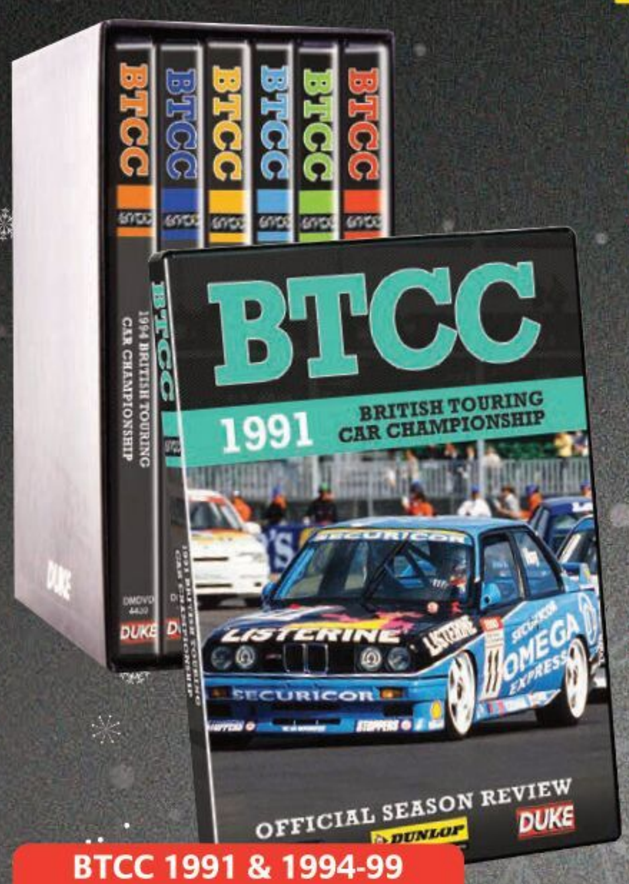

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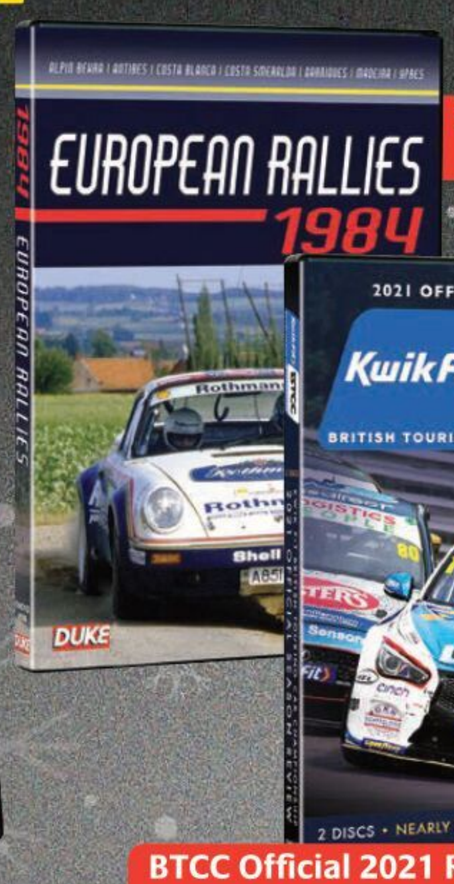

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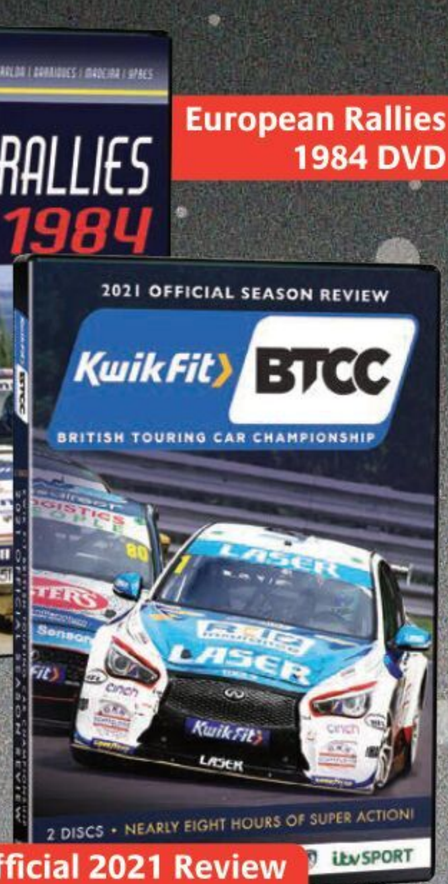
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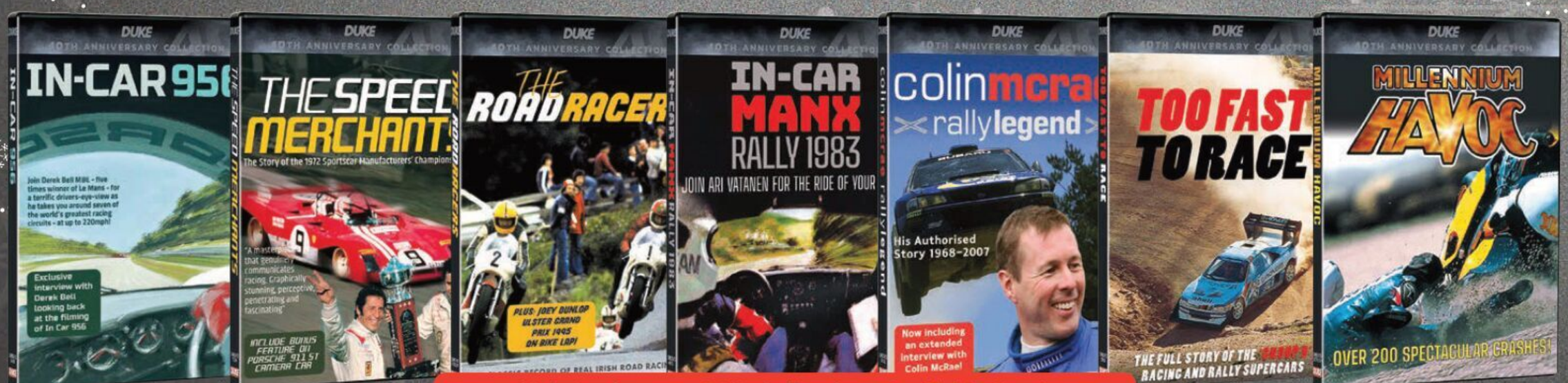

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RALLY NEWS

OGIER PREDICTS A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR THE START OF WRC '22

Multiple champion says there is lots of learning to do on new hybrid era when it breaks cover in Monaco

Photos: Toyota Gazoo Racing, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Jakob Ebrey

Ogier has got to grips with the hybrid Yaris

By Graham Lister

Sebastien Ogier expects a "very, very open" start to the new World championship season on January's Monte Carlo Rally.

Ogier, who beat Welshman Elfyn Evans to claim his eighth WRC title in Monza last month, begins the hybrid-based Rally1 era as a part-time member of the factory Toyota squad following his decision to take a break from regular competition.

The Monte will form part of his schedule, however, although Ogier is expecting winning the WRC event for the ninth time to be anything but a formality, following his initial test of the Toyota Yaris Rally1.

"It's been exciting to test it," said Ogier, who turned 38 last week.

"Obviously it's very different with new technology coming in like with the hybrid and, right now, the team has a big challenge to try to be ready for Monte Carlo. We have not so much guarantee going into this rally so I think it's very, very open."

Of Toyota's first Rally1 offering, Ogier said: "As a driver you always want maximum performance. The car we've been driving for the last year was amazing, the fastest of its kind. Now we step back a little bit in terms of performance but maybe not for long because the team are working very hard for developing this new car and it's an important turn for the sport to go hybrid and follow society. It will be interesting to see which team has done the best job in January."

Speaking during the FIA Prize Giving in Paris last week, Toyota team boss Jari-Matti Latvala said Ogier would be an asset for honing the Yaris Rally1 into a winner.

"Seb's comments were really important because he has quite a huge experience of different cars and now when he was testing for the first time," Latvala said. "Overall I'm happy where we are [in terms of being ready for Monte Carlo] but we can't relax at all and we are 100% working all the time to get everything ready. But the car is working and we are reasonably happy with the performance level, but of course the most exciting thing is to go to Monte when you don't know the level of the others."

Toyota's title winner ready for new partner for new year

World champion Sebastien Ogier reckons life without Julien Ingrassia by his side will work out – but he's asked his former wingman to remain on call.

Ingrassia has retired after calling time on his long-standing partnership with Ogier, which began in 2006, leaving Ogier to recruit Benjamin Veillas instead.

The Frenchman, who has co-driven Eric Camilli in the past, has partnered Ogier on several tests over the years and was part of his safety note crew along with Simon Jean-Joseph.

"He has been by my side for a while during testing so we know each other and we hope it will work," said Ogier. "It's going to be a challenge without Julien but I understand [his decision]. But I said to Julien when we crossed the line in Monza he still has to leave his phone open in case I miss him too much."

MORE POWER FOR RALLY3 MACHINES IN BID TO BOOST INTEREST

M-Sport's Ford Fiesta Rally3 will be even faster in 2022 after the World Motor Sport Council agreed to a power hike.

Pitched as an affordable alternative to four-wheel drive, the Rally3 category has yet to enjoy a spike in interest with M-Sport's Fiesta currently the only car on the market.

However, by changing the restrictor size from 30mm to 31mm, M-Sport expects a power increase of 20hp, which it hopes will translate into more customer interest.

"The car hasn't quite been in the middle of Rally2 and Rally4," said Maciej Woda, boss of M-Sport's Polish operation in Krakow, where the Fiesta Rally3 is built. "We have been working really hard together with the FIA to address this balance. Rally3 is a totally new category with no previous category to base performance on so steps like this are only natural given we are all learning. It does highlight there is a real effort from FIA to make sure Rally3 is right."

The Fiesta Rally3 will replace the Fiesta Rally4 as the Junior WRC's base car from 2022.

Euro runners will target bonus points

EURO SERIES TO MIRROR WRC'S POWERSTAGE

All rounds of the 2022 European Rally Championship will conclude with a World Rally Championship-style Powerstage.

The fastest five drivers will score points on a sliding scale of 5-4-3-2-1 with live television coverage of at least 10 drivers.

The move is the latest format change to the ERC, which will be promoted by WRC Promoter from next season, and will result in the leg bonus points system being scrapped.

Other changes ratified by the World Motor Sport Council include the requirement for all FIA priority drivers, plus the top 15 drivers from 2021 at the first event of the season or the top 15 in the current standings thereafter, taking part in the start order selection process for the first leg of an event.

To score ERC points, drivers must use tyres supplied by a manufacturer registered with the FIA and WRC Promoter although the open tyre system remains.

Seven of the eight rounds were approved as follows: Rally Serras de Fafe e Felgueiras (gravel), March 11-13; Azores Rallye (gravel), March 25-27; Rally Islas Canarias (asphalt), May 12-14; Rally Poland (gravel), June 10-12; Rally Latvia (gravel), July 1-3;

Rally di Roma Capitale (asphalt), July 22-24 and Barum Czech Rally Zlin (asphalt), August 26-28.

BRC HEAD CAMPBELL LANDS EUROPEAN JOB

The British Rally Championship is on the lookout for a new boss after Iain Campbell left his role as manager.

Campbell has been recruited by WRC Promoter to become manager of the European Rally Championship, which it's promoting under a long-term agreement with the FIA from next season.

Scot Campbell, who takes over from Jean-Baptiste Ley as ERC boss, had been in his role as BRC manager since 2015 and also worked for Motorsport UK as Rally GB clerk of the course.

"We're not planning huge changes for 2022 but I'll be keeping a keen eye on ideas for the future," Campbell said of his immediate plans for the ERC. "It's great to take up this role at the start of WRC Promoter's ERC tenure and I can't wait to get started."

There was no news on who will replace Campbell as BRC head, but Motorsport UK is advertising the role of rally manager. Campbell's successor will therefore be responsible for not just running the BRC but also "rally event consultancy and supporting the management of the rally sporting discipline".

Campbell now has a new job

NO CLARITY YET ON 2022 WORLD RALLY ROSTER

The status of the 2022 World Rally Championship calendar's 13th event remained unclear when Motorsport News's Christmas double issue closed for press last week.

While it had been expected that Rally Northern Ireland would be added to the schedule approved by the World Motor Sport Council in October, there was no proposal from the WRC Commission for the WMSC to consider when it met in Paris on December 15.

Although it's unlikely the WRC schedule will be finalised before the end of the year now, several rule changes were ratified by Jean Todt's final WMSC as FIA president.

They included cutting the number of engines per season from three to two and limiting hybrid units to nine for a three-car team or six for a two-car team to reduce costs.

In addition, all Rally1 cars will carry two pairs of high-voltage protection gloves to allow both driver and co-driver to assist in the event of a possible hybrid system failure.

From 2022, drivers will be allowed to stop and correctly fasten their safety helmet strap – if they realise during a stage it is not correctly fastened – without receiving a penalty, which will now be in time rather than a fine.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RALLY NEWS

WORLD AND EURO RX GET 2022 SHAKE-UP

Date and qualifying rules tweak for fresh campaigns

By Hal Ridge

A raft of format changes will form a new structure to World Rallycross and European Rallycross weekends in 2022.

Both Euro RX and World RX continue to be run by Rallycross Promoter GmbH, with the World RX series not getting underway until the Swedish round at Holjes in July. Motorsport News understands this will give teams time work on building their new all-electric cars for the 2022 season.

The World RX calendar will comprise two single-header events to begin the season, in Sweden and Germany, before five double-header rounds in Norway, Latvia, Portugal, Belgium and South Africa complete the schedule, the Norwegian and South African rounds returning to the series pending Covid restrictions.

A single-lap 'SuperPole' for World RX drivers will be used to determine grid positions for Heat One (the qualifying races are now again called Heats), instead of the draw used in recent years. For single-header rounds, three Heats will take place, with two at double-headers.

In a big shift, all World RX races will be for five cars starting line abreast, and run over five laps, including the semi-final and final. The top two from each semi-final will progress to the final, plus the highest-ranked third place driver from qualifying. While the overall ranking will be determined by the race time in each Heat, the finishing position on track will determine the starting position in the next session. After the Heats, drivers will enter a 'Progression' race, with the top 10 drivers progressing through to the semi-finals. Championship points will now only be awarded at the end of each event: a win will secure 20 points, down to one point for 15th.

The European Rallycross Championship will start earlier, returning to the historic Nyirad circuit in Hungary for the 2022 season-opener, breaking away from supporting World Rallycross Championship events for the opening two rounds of its campaign.

Hungarian circuit Nyirad was dropped from the top-flight rallycross schedule after the 2013 season and will open the 2022 campaign, while another yet-to-be-confirmed venue will host the second of six rounds. The most recent standalone European championship round was held at Estering in Germany during 2019.

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool

The European RX Championship will strike out on its own to start 2022

PROVISIONAL 2022 CALENDAR

FIA World Rallycross Championship

DATE	ROUND	VENUE
July 2-3	1	Holjes, Sweden
July 30-31	2	Nurburgring, Germany
Aug 13-14	3/4	Hell, Norway*
Sept 3-4	5/6	Riga, Latvia
Sept 17-18	7/8	Montalegre, Portugal*
Oct 8-9	9/10	Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium
TBC	11/12	Cape Town, South Africa*

PROVISIONAL 2022 CALENDAR

FIA RX2e Championship

DATE	ROUND	VENUE
July 2-3	1	Holjes, Sweden
July 30-31	2	Nürburgring, Germany
August 13-14	3	Hell, Norway*
Sept 3-4	4	Riga, Latvia
Oct 8-9	5	Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

PROVISIONAL 2022 CALENDAR

FIA European Championship (Euro RX1)

DATE	ROUND	VENUE
May 21-22	1	Nyirad, Hungary*
June 18-19	2	TBC*
July 2-3	3	Holjes, Sweden
Sept 3-4	4	Riga, Latvia
Sept 17-18	5	Montalegre, Portugal*
Oct 8-9	6	Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

PROVISIONAL 2022 CALENDAR

FIA European Championship (Euro RX3)

DATE	ROUND	VENUE
May 21-22	1	Nyirad, Hungary*
June 18-19	2	TBC*
July 2-3	3	Holjes, Sweden
July 30-31	4	Nurburgring, Germany
Aug 13-14	5	Hell, Norway*
Sept 17-18	6	Montalegre, Portugal*

*Subject to track homologation

5 NATIONS BRX ANNOUNCES 2022 SCHEDULE

After falling short of its full schedule of events in 2021, British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy bosses have released the series' proposed 2022 calendar aimed at avoiding date clashes with other series.

A traditional Easter Bank Holiday opener at Lydden Hill will bring a double-header, the two rounds taking place on Saturday and Monday, with Sunday as a day off. Like Lydden, Pembrey in South Wales will host two separate 5 Nations BRX weekends through the season, the first of which as a double-header on May 14-15, and the second on August Bank Holiday.

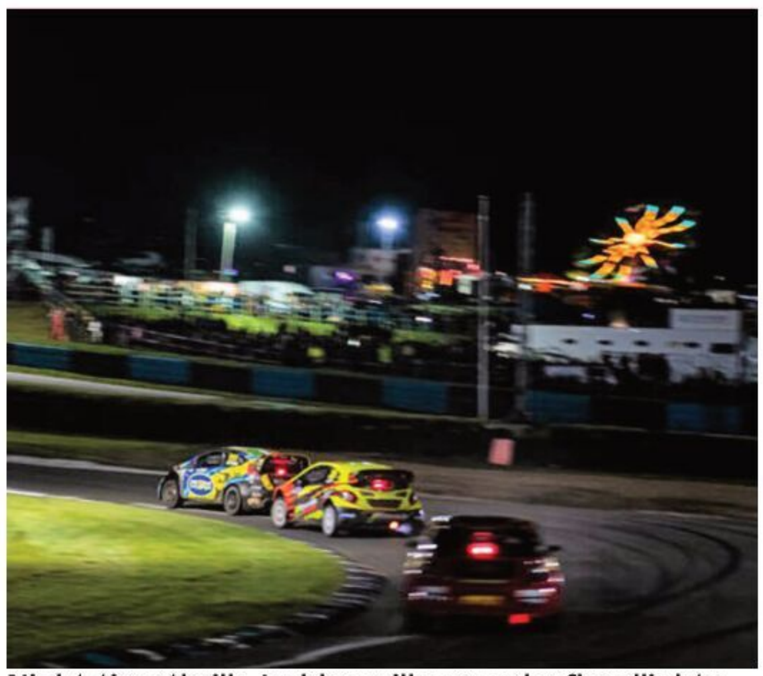
The August event will replicate the Lydden's Saturday-Monday format. The two Welsh rounds will be punctuated by a trip to Mondello Park, which had been planned for the last two years but thwarted by Covid travel restrictions. An additional round within Europe is being planned for July, but a venue or specific date are yet to be confirmed.

Lydden will host the finale on November 5-6, with the final on day one held under floodlights, as has become customary.

PROVISIONAL 2022 CALENDAR

BRC 5 Nations

DATE	VENUE
April 16	Lydden Hill, England
April 18	Lydden Hill, England
May 14-15	Pembrey, Wales
June 4-5	Mondello Park, Ireland
July	TBC, TBC
August 27	Pembrey, Wales
August 29	Pembrey, Wales
Nov 5-6	Lydden Hill, England



Night-time thrills: Lydden will run under floodlights

ROAD RALLY ROUND UP

Davies and Bloxham top Preston

The Preston Rally was won in emphatic style by John Davies/Nick Bloxham; they finished more than five minutes ahead of the field on the fast and furious event.

As ever, the meat of the action was on 120 miles of loose surface tracks. Despite their victory margin, Davies/Bloxham did not have an easy event after being forced to contend with a failed clutch on their Ford Puma.

"We had to start off from controls on the key and change gear without a clutch" reported Bloxham.

An early challenge from Ethan Davies/Richard Crozier, second at the first petrol halt, came to nought as their Puma succumbed to a failed clutch. They were not alone: 34 of the 71 starters failed to make the Finish.

Other retirements included Keith Lane/Martin Lane, who ran out of spare tyres, and Huw Morris/Matt Smalley.

Jonathan Stimpson/Brian Cammack took the runner-up spot, four minutes ahead of the similar MGZS of third-placed Owen Turner/Andy Ballantyne. The latter crew had to be towed out of ruts on two occasions but were still the last car with penalties of less than an hour.

Ian Mills

Results

The Preston Road Rally

Organiser: Chelmsford Motor Club **When:** December 11-12 **Where:** East Anglia Route: 197 miles **Starters:** 71. 1 John Davies/Nick Bloxham (Ford Puma) 45m55s; 2 Jonathan Stimpson/Brian Cammack (MG ZR) +5m19s; 3 Owen Turner/Andy Ballantyne (MG ZR); 4 Craig Varney/Alex Higgins (MG ZR); 5 Peter Riddle/Julian Riley (Vauxhall Nova); 6 Craig Bellworthy/David Smalley (Puma); 7 Elliott Sharp/Matt Clark (MG ZR); 8 Sam Grant/Tim Grant (Rover Streetwise); 9 Dan Arthurton/Will Malkin (Nissan Micra); 10 Jens Nuemeister/Richard Drydale (Volvo 740). **Class winners:** Semi-experts: Varney/Higgins; Novices: Grant/Grant

RXR CROWNED AS EXTREME E CHAMPION

The five-round inaugural Extreme E season climaxed on the Bovington tank ranges last weekend and the RXR pair of Johan Kristoffersson and Molly Taylor were crowned as champions.

Their victory in the points standings came even though the Dorset event was won by title rivals Sebastien Loeb and Cristina Gutierrez driving for X44.

The two title-contending outfits had Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton acting as their respective figureheads this year, although only Rosberg was present in Dorset to cheer on his crew. Kristoffersson/Taylor finished fourth on the event after completing their stints at the wheel, which tied them at the top of the standings with Loeb/Gutierrez.

Despite such a dominant showing from the Hamilton-affiliated team to take its first win of the campaign in Dorset, the title belonged to Rosberg's crew on countback after winning three of the previous four rounds. "It feels amazing," said Australian rally driver Taylor. "The nerves were definitely there today but Johan and I kept our eyes on the final prize, and the whole team effort across many months has brought us to this point today."

X44 leads the race, but RXR (second) took Extreme E title

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HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

1972 PEUGEOT 504

Current owner: Richard Phillipson

Peugeot: global player...

It has a rally history
Richard Phillipson: "It is a 1972 car that was prepared to do London to Sydney in 1977 but it didn't do the event because the driver got sick or something and then it languished for many years. Dave Gough, who is the owner, and I drove it to Cape Town in one of Philip Young's events, the London to Cape Town Rally in 2012."

It didn't start well
"That was an ignominious start as the injection failed in Kent and it's a really long way to Cape Town from Kent when you've only set out from Brooklands. We were going to finish and so a friend helped us tow it down to Dover. We got it into northern France and started fitting different fuel pumps, but the problem was in the metering unit. We got it over the Alps and eventually to Greece, where we turned it into a carburettor car, which was just appalling. Dave did almost all the work, but I rebuilt the head in the hotel car park."

There was even more trouble
"Anyway, we got to Alexandria. It had good traction and drove well in the sand. Then we went through Saudi Arabia and Sudan where Dave fell into a pothole, which just put the struts out to hilarious angles. We were often on the same day as the rest of the rally, got it into Nairobi for the famous rest day and put it in a garage. The guys who changed the front wheel bearings tightened them up but failed to back them off the quarter turn or whatever was required."

They were stuck in Namibia
"In Namibia we screwed the wheel bearings during the world's largest storm. We spent a couple of days in upcountry Namibia until we could get some bearings and we finished the rally."

It did the Roger Albert Clark
"Dave's taken it to Kenya and considerably upgraded it since then. It's got 145bhp but good traction. We entered it in the Safari class on the Roger Albert Clark Rally. More than half the entries were Escorts and I like to do something unusual. My plan was to drive to the end. I'm not that good a driver and the car didn't deserve to win. The best I could do for the crew and my own entertainment was to finish and we did!"

Fans will get close to the action in 2022

Photos: Paul Lawrence

The Ironbridge power station site is being regenerated

POWER STATION BACKDROP FOR HISTORIC RALLY FESTIVAL

October event to use special area of Ironbridge Gorge in the Midlands

By Paul Lawrence

The spectacular setting of the former power station in the Ironbridge Gorge will play host to competition cars during an extended Historic Rally Festival in October.

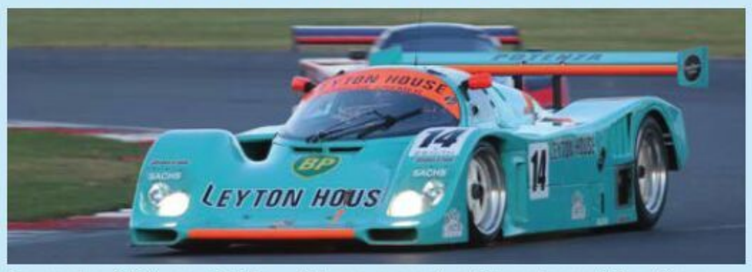
The organisers of the Telford-based Historic Rally Festival have secured the use of the 350-acre site for special stages on day one of the October 15-16 event. Also new will be demonstration stages in the darkness of Saturday evening in Weston Park, which is the focus of the action on Sunday.

The power station is embarking on a huge regeneration plan by the Harworth Group to create 1000 new homes, a park and public open spaces. Hosting stages of the Historic Rally Festival will showcase Harworth's plans following the recent demolition of the landmark cooling towers. The nearby Ironbridge Gorge is a World Heritage site.

Warner Lewis, event organiser said: "This is a tremendous opportunity to expand the Festival into an even bigger multi-venue historic demonstration rally. We are also really excited about our plans at Weston Park and being able to run the cars into the evening and create those special moments of the old RAC Rally days."

After the stages in Weston Park on Saturday evening, the cars will return to Telford for an overnight halt. As well as more demonstration special stages on Sunday, the day will feature a 'meet and greet' session when the rally cars taking part will be displayed in a specially created area for the public to see the cars close up and meet the drivers.

CLASSIC GROUP C PORSCHES TO JOIN GOODWOOD MEETING



Porsche 962s and 956s will be present at Members' Meeting

Group C Porsches of the 1980s will be demonstrated at the 79th Goodwood Members' Meeting on April 9-10.

Up to 20 examples of the famous 956 and 962 sportscar designs will run in high-speed sessions. The Porsches will run as the sun sets on Saturday and again in full daylight on Sunday to mark 40 years since the debut of the 956 in the Silverstone Six-Hours in May 1982. Former 956 and 962 drivers will be on hand.

A new race at the Members' Meeting will be a dedicated race for Pre-War Frazer Nashes named in honour of racer and war hero A.F.P Fane, who raced Frazer Nashes with great success and became a shareholder in the company in 1935.

The Nash race, which replicates similar races held at Cadwell Park, Castle Combe and Silverstone, will replace the SF Edge Trophy for Edwardian cars, which is being rested for 2022.

Peugeot reunited brings joy for Evans on R.A.C.

A quarter of a century after he first rallied the car, Ricky Evans finished the Roger Albert Clark Rally in his Peugeot 205 GTi.

The rally man says getting the car back and finishing the five-day marathon was a dream come true. "We've all had those cars we regret selling and B520 XDE was that one for me," Evans said. "My sons Dan and Mat suggested trying to get it back and doing the R.A.C. in it."

The 205 had four or five subsequent owners and was located in Ireland before going back to Staffordshire for a complete rebuild.

With Dan co-driving, they finished a class-winning 48th overall. "We made it to the finish, that's all that mattered to me," said Evans Sr.

Friends reunited: 205 and Evans

Huge route planned for Silver Fern

The outline route for the New Zealand Silver Fern Rally next November has been unveiled as the event organisers plan to run the biennial event for the first time since 2018.

Widely regarded as the world's ultimate gravel rally for historic cars, the Silver Fern will start in Christchurch on the South Island on Sunday November 20 and finish back there on Saturday November 26 after seven days of competition.

The route will cover 650 stage miles with overnight halts in Oamaru, Dunedin, Gore and Timaru. The rally has traditionally been very popular with crews from the UK and Europe and British crews finished 1-2-3 in 2018 headed by Matthew Robinson and Sam Collis.

MRL FIRMS UP SILVERSTONE SPECTACULAR FOR 2022

Motor Racing Legends has confirmed plans to run its late-season Silverstone Grand Prix circuit meeting for the third time in 2022. The weekend of October 22-23 will feature a full programme of MRL and Historic Racing Drivers' Club races on the Grand Prix circuit, topped by the three-hour Royal Automobile Club Pall Mall Cup and the Amon Cup for Ford GT40s, pictured above.

IN BRIEF

Back on the beat
After finishing the Roger Albert Clark Rally in 14th place, despite spending 10 minutes in a Kielder ditch, Alan Walker and John Connor will lead the historic entry on the Grizedale Stages on its revised date of January 14-15. Walker is currently repreparing his Ford Escort Mk2 after the Roger Albert, which was its first event since a major fire on the 2019 edition.

Riponian regs
Regulations have been published for the Riponian Stages on Sunday February 6, the opening round of the Motorsport UK British Historic Rally Championship. The Yorkshire event, which was cancelled in 2020 due to strong winds and lost in 2021 to Covid, will be based in Thirsk and run over 44 stage miles in six special stages. The maximum entry is 120 cars.

Mini Cup is go
Eight events are planned for the HRCR Mini Sport Cup in 2022, ranging from a single-venue rally at Down Ampney to closed-road rallies in Scotland and Belgium. The season starts on Epynt on May 1 with the Dixies Challenge and concludes in late November at Anglesey. The Cheviot Stages on Otterburn adds to a diverse and varied calendar.

Hazel Chapman
Motorsport News was sad to learn of the death last week of Hazel Chapman, wife of Lotus founder Colin, at the age of 94. She was born Hazel Williams in 1927 and met Colin soon after her 16th birthday. The first Lotus Mk1 was built in the lock-up garage at her parents' house, and she was pivotal to the establishment and development of Lotus. She raced the early cars alongside her husband but was widowed when Colin died in 1982.

Clee Hills is full
The Clee Hills Trial, scheduled for Sunday January 23, has now attracted a capacity entry of 80 cars and motorbikes. The 2021 event was a casualty of the Covid lockdown, but the Midland Automobile Club has had a great response for the 2022 trial, which will be based at Ludlow and take in well-known hills in the area.

Kingsley's victory
Simon Kingsley delivered the perfect result on the recent Monty Peters Historic Sporting Trial in Kent by cleaning every hill in his post-historic Kincraft. Andy Gowen (Facksimilie) ran Kingsley close by dropping just three marks while Mitch Wood won the historic class in his Cannon but only on a tie-break with the similar car of Mark Howse.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR

Motorsport News gathers the best images from 2021

Motorsport, after a heavily disrupted 2020, got truly back into its stride this year. Spectators returned and there was plenty to keep them entertained in 12 months of intense drama throughout the various categories.

Through it all our dedicated photographers provided the images from the circuits and stages, and we've gathered our picks of the very best of 2021's shots. Plus the MN team and friends have each outlined their personal favourite moment from the year.

Photos by Lina Arnautova/AutoSportMedia, Rachel Bourne, Roy Dempster, Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins, Michael Chester, Mike Hills Speed Images, Red Bull Content Pool, Steve Jones, Paul Lawrence, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, mkpics.net, Jim Moir, Motorsport Images, Ollie Read, Richard Styles, SMJ Photography and Mick Walker

Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton's close Formula 1 championship battle gets too close in the Italian Grand Prix at Monza, as Verstappen parks on Hamilton's shoulder. Fortunately no-one was injured

Matt James *Editor*

When: September 19 **Where:** Foxhall Heath, Ipswich

They once sang that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone. That is a sentiment that fans appreciated throughout most of 2020.

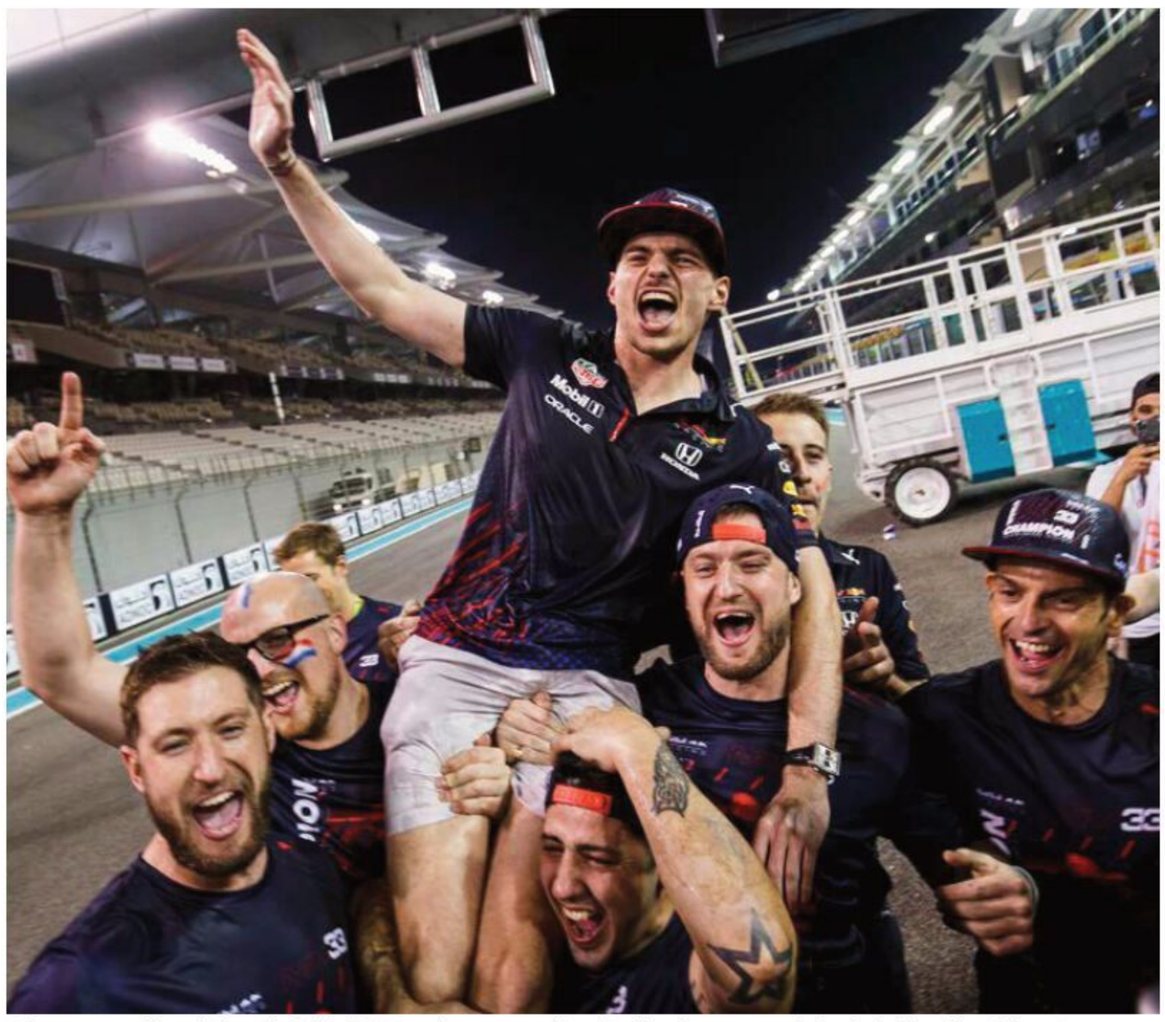
It reminded us all, to a degree, just why we love this sport. Even the things that we might have otherwise taken for granted, the smells and the sounds, seemed to resonate so much more as motorsport opened up again.

There was only one place I was going to be in mid-September, and that was at Foxhall Heath for the National Hot Rod World Final. Thanks to the generosity of promoter Deane Wood, I had one of the best seats in the house for the winner-takes-all 75-lap final.

Flying Scotsman Rob McDonald, who had held the title since the last running of the event in 2019, made the race quite predictable, particularly as he hit the front from the get-go. But, in a way, that didn't matter.

It was about the rebirth of top-flight events, the culmination of a wait for fans and drivers that had lasted an interminable amount of time.

If you haven't been to a World Final, make sure you go. The anticipation, the build-up, the Hot Laps in qualifying, the track parade and the fervour from the crowd mean that by the time the event kicks off at midday, the whole venue is rocking. It is one of the greatest shows in national motorsport.



After a sensational Abu Dhabi finish, Verstappen and Red Bull colleagues celebrate taking the drivers' crown

Spectators returned to UK motorsport in 2021 and plenty were on hand to cheer for Hamilton at Silverstone

Osian Pryce's lights lead the way as his British Rally Championship title bid continues on the Mull Rally

Colleagues help Kazuki Nakajima toast his retirement after winning WEC's Bahrain 8 Hours season-closer

Graham Keilloh *Deputy Editor*

When: May 22 **Where:** Brands Hatch

This year I added to my beat the GB3 championship, or BRDC British Formula 3 as it was still called at 2021's start. Heading to Brands Hatch's season opener I felt I had a reasonable sense of who would be quick. But after qualifying in a close second place sat someone who I'll admit hadn't yet impinged on my consciousness. A 16-year-old called Ollie Bearman.

It got more impressive too once I spoke to him. The 20-minute qualifying session was, it transpired, his first time on slicks around Brands' Grand Prix circuit: testing was on the Indy layout and the warm-up was wet. And all the while Bearman was, unlike your correspondent, taking his prodigious

achievements in his stride.

I found out later too that Bearman felt pole could have been his had he taken on a full new set of tyres near the session's end. Nevertheless he made good on his starting slot with two close second-place finishes.

The season got even better for Bearman as he bagged two top-level Formula 4 titles as well as ran at the front in two further GB3 guest appearances. By the year's end Bearman was a Ferrari academy driver. Campaigns don't get much better.

Sebastien Ogier catches some air on his way to a sensational Sardinia victory, despite driving first on the road, and eventually to his eighth World title and stepping away from full-time World Rally Championship competition

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

Nick Garton Reporter

When: June 29 **Where:** The Royal Oak, Guildford

My highlight came in a pub with the editor and, for probably the first time in such circumstances, it is a story fit for publication.

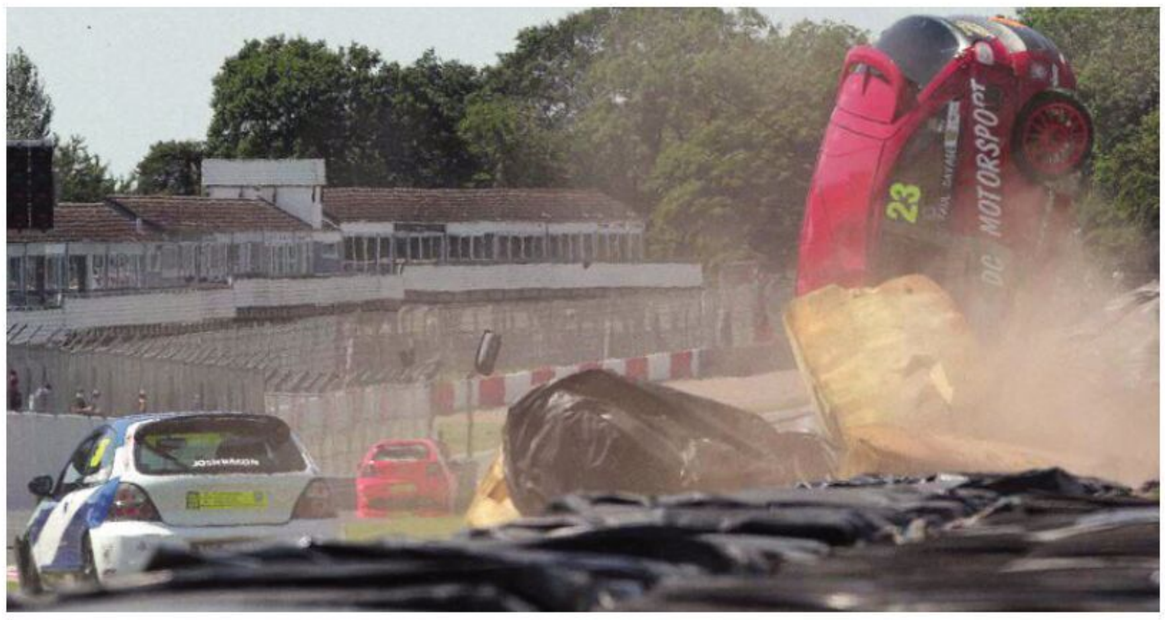
In 1995, I was fresh out of university and working at Silverstone while looking for a 'proper job'. A junior position at Motorsport News was advertised and I got an interview but missed out – when I asked for feedback, I was told that my pick as a potential star of the future, Alex Wurz, was "just a rich kid who crashes a lot."

This proved to be a blessing in disguise because I was pipped to the post by Matt James, whose dedication to this magazine has been its backbone ever since. It's also led me to 25 unforgettable years traversing every professional discipline aside from NASCAR and IndyCar before finally being invited by MJ to join his team while we were in the pub this summer.

Like many readers (and most of the stars whom we feature on these pages), MN has been a constant presence: my dad subscribed and I read every word when he was done. The opportunity to contribute to that story is all the sweeter after a quarter of a century.

The crowds are back: Brands Hatch's truck meeting attracts a packed audience to Kent in November

Matthew Rees finds out he's taken the British Formula 4 drivers' crown in the Brands Hatch season finale



Paul Savage escaped unharmed from this spectacular exit from an MG Trophy race at Donington Park

Paul Lawrence Historics Editor

When: November 25 **Where:** Kershope Forest, Carlisle

It was quite literally the calm before the storm. It was the opening evening of the Roger Albert Clark Rally in late November and after a brisk walk in from Kershope Bridge, seven of us were up a bank just before the flying finish of the opening stage in Newcastleton.

The bonus was that 300 yards away, across the bridge was the start of stage two in Kershope. The river marks the boundary between Scotland and England and once the first cars went into Kershope we could see and, importantly, hear two stages in two nations at once.

It was a calm, frosty and starry night, the company was great and the banter was lively. Then in a glorious piece of synchronicity, David Kynaston started Kershope just as Frank Tundo approached on Newcastleton, both in Triumph TR7 V8s. We had stereo rumbling Rover V8s in both England and Scotland at the same time. Of course, there were Ford BDAs and BDGs all around to provide the backing

track. It was simply fantastic and just a part of what this epic rally is all about.

Of course, 24 hours later we were in the midst of Storm Arwen, and everything was rather different.

Peter Greenfield's glorious 1938 Alfa Romeo 158 'Alfetta' races as the Goodwood Revival returned this year

Marty McCormack's Ford Escort Mk2 with a scenic Welsh border country backdrop on the Woodpecker Rally

David Addison *Columnist at large*

When: September 26 **Where:** Silverstone

There's a puddle of liquid on the Silverstone grid. It is just where Rory Butcher is going to park his BTCC pole-winning Toyota Corolla and it is the area of urgent pre-race discussion. Better still, I can see it all happening: this is our first BTCC weekend in a commentary box since the end of 2019. Since then, ITV's health and safety checks have meant that we have been in the TV compound only with no paddock access but thankfully we are now allowed out again.

Part of the appeal of the BTCC, and especially working in it, is access to the people that make it all happen and that, allied to a view of the cars from out of the window, made Silverstone a special BTCC weekend. The paddock is bustling and the atmosphere is totally different as the world becomes normal once more.

Looking down on the grid and seeing the drama unfold all adds to the sense of involvement that has been lacking while we have been in

the compound. Seeing racing cars is one of the key motivations to doing the job in the first place.

That race, of course, had a Butcher/Tom Ingram lead battle and controversy, all elements of the BTCC.

The Snetterton sun peeks over the spectacular Raw Motorsport Radical at a typically packed GT Cup meeting

Who is facing the right way up at Silverstone? The Minis provide some usual frolics at the British Automobile Racing Club's Silverstone International meeting in April

BTCC stars Tom Oliphant, Tom Ingram and Ash Sutton watch the champagne corks fly at Brands Hatch

Hal Ridge *Rallycross Editor*

When: October 10 **Where:** Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

It was a case of history repeating itself, sort of, for Andreas Bakkerud at the final round of the European Rallycross Championship at Spa-Francorchamps, on the support roster to World RX.

In 2019 Bakkerud started on the front row of the final at the World RX finale in Cape Town that was essentially a winner-takes-all affair. But, after a first-lap incident it was Bakkerud's rival Timmy Hansen who claimed the crown.

Short of budget, Bakkerud was forced to take a step back from World RX this season, but a late deal got him onto the grid for the Euro RX season-opener with the ES Motorsport team, and he finished on the podium. Further late deals got him to the subsequent events, but still he suffered poor fortune.

Perseverance meant that for the final six-lap race of the year, Bakkerud lined up alongside title-rival Fabien Pailler on the front row of the grid. It was again winner-takes-all and, this time, it went Bakkerud's way. While I'm sure the success didn't make up for not winning the World title in South Africa two years ago, it made for a big celebration. The achievement was almost unanimously enjoyed and respected through the World RX paddock.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

James Roberts *F1 correspondent*

When: July 16-18 **Where:** Silverstone

Sitting behind a bright blue Honda Civic Type R, I became aware of people pointing and waving in the direction of the driver in front. The early morning Silverstone heat meant my car windows were down so I could hear the crowd cheering for Pierre Gasly ahead of me. It was wonderful to soak up the enthusiasm of the returning fans who had not been able to attend the British Grand Prix for two years.

And boy, were they treated to a weekend of action. From the thrilling qualifying session on Friday evening – capped by a great lap from Lewis Hamilton – to the first F1 'race' on a Saturday for 36 years. Then, of course, there was the drama at Copse corner when the two title rivals made contact...

I wasn't at the 1987 British GP, but the atmosphere at this year's race must have been close. Once Hamilton had served his penalty, he set about closing down Charles Leclerc for the win – cheered on by the patriotic crowd – just as Mansell had done in his epic battle with Piquet. In an F1 season full of drama, this was a weekend that will be remembered for years.

Jordan Dempsey gets on two wheels battling in a typically frantic landmark 50th Formula Ford Festival

The post-race debrief starts immediately after Jonathan Sharp's Riley beats Simon Blakeney-Edwards' Frazer Nash by just 0.02 seconds in Cadwell Park's Vintage Sports-Car Club Pre-war Sports Cars' encounter

Jonny Greer, accompanied by some daisies, on the way to winning Northern Ireland's Bishopscourt Stages

Graham Lister *Reporter*

When: November 21 **Where:** Galdar, Gran Canaria

Alexey Lukyanuk is one of the fastest drivers never to win a World championship rally. He's also one of the fastest crashers based on some of his car-wrecking exploits over time.

But having produced one of the drives of his life to dominate Rally Islas Canarias with an error-free performance, what could possibly go wrong when, slightly bleary eyed, Lukyanuk turned high-speed chauffeur for various media guests the morning after the European championship season closer last month?

Having climbed aboard Lukyanuk's Sainteloc Junior Team Citroen C3 Rally2, the drop to the Atlantic Ocean below was one of the first things that caught my eye as we drove to a two-mile Tarmac stage west of Las Palmas.

"We go almost 100% because I guess you can't read pacenotes," the Russian assumed correctly, before blasting off towards a sharp uphill left-hander at the end of a long straight.

Based on what followed, I'm not sure where we were on Lukyanuk's percentage scale, but it seemed like 200%, such was his keenness for attacking corners and leaving his braking to what seemed like being impossibly late.

"I really hope I gave you some pleasure?" he enquired.

Glenn Bell, Joey Palmer and Perry Cooke get three abreast down the home straight at Hednesford Hills Raceway for the Hot Rod National Weekend in August

Luke Barry *Rally correspondent*

When: May 31 **Where:** Oulton Park

I'm accustomed to walking around rally cars and talking to rally drivers; I'm not so used to climbing into one next to one. Yet in May this year that's exactly what I did – and I'm still not quite sure I believe it.

I won't ever forget the first moment I saw the car with my name on the side window, it just didn't make any sense.

The rally was the Neil Howard Stages at Oulton Park, rescheduled from November, which also was the opening round of the British Rally Championship. Graham Coffey and I were seeded down at 27 (and ironically finished there too) due to the immense entry – and thankfully I didn't mess up any of the splits.

It was an important weekend for British rallying too which had been in hibernation for far, far too long. Yes there were slight issues that cropped up throughout the day but it was simply brilliant to see everybody again – and, selfishly for me, rather surreal for competitors to be asking me how I was getting on rather than the other way around.

I still have my licence, helmet and overalls so if anybody needs a new co-driver, my phone is on...

Richard Steele rolls his Ford Fiesta ST out of the ST-XR Challenge race at Knockhill in June

Geoff Richardson gets a wheel in the air on his way to victory in an Irish Legends race at Mondello Park

Dan Rowbottom *British Touring Car Championship race winner*

When: All season **Where:** All over the UK

From the moment we started testing back in March, I knew 2021 was set to be a re-shift.

The professionalism of the Team Dynamics British Touring Car Championship team and its knowledge meant that, pretty much from the off, all I had to do was to point the car and just, well, hang on. I owe so much to team boss Matt Neal and all at Team Dynamics: they made the shift so painless.

The BTCC season started with a bang and we managed to hook our first win at a sunny Oulton Park in August.

This was special on a couple of counts. Firstly, the amazing BTCC fans (aka nutters) were back after so long. But mainly because my long-term partner, Cataclean, was there in full force. It is a British company, based up the road in Liverpool, so to grab that first win there, in that way, was really special. I managed it up against one of the toughest guys I have ever encountered: my team-mate Flash (Gordon Shedden). It only goes a little way to express my gratitude to all at Cataclean; you have to start somewhere...

I wish all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. The BTCC season won't be long now and we have hybrid and driver-team shifts. However, my only interest is to win the thing... bring it on.

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FEATURE

HOW A FAMILY TEAM CONQUERED THE BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Melvyn Evans Motorsport had never entered the BRC as a team before 2021, but it beat the might of M-Sport at its very first attempt. Luke Barry finds out how

Edwards took his Melvyn Evans car to the BRC crown

Osian Pryce was a title threat in a fast and consistent campaign

Lining up ready to grab Osian Pryce for a word as he returned to Llandudno as the winner of the Cambrian Rally, we shuffled ourselves into position.

But before we could grab Pryce's attention and find out just how he'd done it, Meirion Evans' outstretched hand appeared and the two embraced. "Well done boy," Evans said before Pryce was engulfed by the whole team desperate to congratulate him.

Rallying is a team effort, and that's no more apparent than within the service tent of Melvyn Evans Motorsport. Pryce's win was huge for his own title bid – that he'd ultimately miss out on at the Ulster Rally – but along with Matt Edwards in third it also secured Melvyn Evans Motorsport the British Rally Championship teams' trophy, up against the team that had dominated the series for years: M-Sport. That's no small feat.

"Winning events is OK, winning anything is always nice, but something like the BRC which has got a good name to it, to win that – especially the first time we set out to do it – feels really good," says boss Melvyn Evans. "[It's] obviously one of our best achievements so far to win that and not just win it, basically we dominated it mostly through the year. You need three good ingredients to make the cake work and we had good drivers, I was pretty confident that the VW Polo was a good car and I know our team. They've been working with us for over 10 years, so to be fair when you've got somebody running at the front even the boys pull together, they all put more effort in because it's an achievement for the mechanics as much as all of us. We're a big family, it's not just a business, the people who work with me – they're friends. They live all within probably 10 miles of where the workshop is, so it was nice to have a Welsh driver and a Welsh team win it."

Melvyn's son Meirion, who describes his role this year as like an "unqualified engineer", adds: "I don't know how dad felt about it personally but setting out at the start of the year firstly you don't get two drivers that can potentially win the championship come to you every year and then also I thought ever since the BRC's gone back four-wheel drive it's always been won by a Fiesta, and it really needs to change. It's not that I have anything against M-Sport, I just think for the diversity of the championship it's good to have different cars racing. It was nice for us as a family business – I know M-Sport's a family business but it's on a much bigger scale – to go and win. It was nice actually for us that they put Matthew [Wilson] out as well, because it showed that they actually still wanted to win, by having Matthew there."

Wilson (r) was M-Sport's threat

It's clear then how much this achievement means to this team based in the depth of the Carmarthenshire village of Llanwrda. Winning isn't a new feeling – Melvyn is a multiple championship-winning driver and the team has run Julian Reynolds to the 2012 British Historic Championship title and the late Manus Kelly to his three consecutive Donegal victories between 2016-18 – but to do so on this scale was immense.

Both Melvyn and Meirion are too modest to admit it, but this was no accidental success. Of course, the BRC isn't like the WRC where the team can select its own drivers, but there's a reason Edwards and Pryce chose the team. Perhaps the Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 was a big part of their thinking. Melvyn Evans Motorsport made the conscious decision to become the go-to team for these cars, and it's paid off despite them not being officially linked to a manufacturer anymore.

"The story behind that is mainly my history has been with Subaru World Rally Cars, and we did a lot of work closely alongside Prodrive," Melvyn explains.

"You rarely get two top-level drivers in one team"

Meirion Evans

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

Impressive hit rate: the Melvyn Evans crew

Edwards succumbed to mechanical woes on the Grampian Rally

The two VW Polos went head to head in Ulster

"So I knew all the top engineers in Prodrive and when they went to VW Motorsport they were always onto me 'Melvyn you need to get a Polo across for you in the UK' and they knew me from the past with Subarus, so they were happy to see us take them so that's where it came from.

"Obviously the Polo was a good product, and it was a bit of a sour taste when VW decided they were pulling the plug on the motorsport side themselves, but the way I look at it the car has still been designed and developed well within the capabilities of running alongside anything for I think the next two years. Because with the R5 category, there's not a lot you can do because of the rules and regulations you get to a certain point where you can't actually do much. And to be honest I've still got the contacts, all the engineers. Erik Wevers has taken the motorsport side on which has been a big help, anything we've needed there's back-up and there's even VW engineers who are my mates, they're only at the end of a phone if I need anything.

"Basically we had all the set-ups and the testing that VW Motorsport had done to see what was working in GB so we could build off that really," Melvyn reveals. "So the backing was pretty good with them to help us. They obviously wanted us to win because it's an achievement for them to get the cars to the top level, so we've had a lot of help on that side. Basically we were running our cars similar to the 2015 WRC car in terms of suspension settings, stuff like that. In 2015, that won everything, so I knew we had a good base to start off with and it's just fine-tuning then for different drivers and what they preferred to get the best out of it. There's no point having a good product if you don't know how to work with it."

Meirion believes it was nice to prove a point with the Polo, and that the accumulative experience of the team helped get the most out of the package. "I had a few people at the start of the year say 'Volkswagen have pulled the plug, it's not going to be supported and all that.' It's all bullshit really but it just winds you up. So it was nice just to set the record straight really," he says. "Obviously if there was anything we could speak to some engineers from Volkswagen about I have contacts there. [But] because me and dad compete ourselves I think we can offer pretty good advice, and obviously we run the cars so we're quite mechanically minded in terms of set-up, so we can offer some advice that way maybe that some people couldn't."

The record book suggests 2021 was an easy one for Melvyn Evans Motorsport in the end, as the team won five rallies and at least one of its cars was on the podium on all seven rounds. But there was a scare towards the start of the season with Edwards' car – a brand-new one at the start of the season – developed what was later diagnosed as an engine wiring loom fault. The team had to use all its nous to fix the issue that first appeared on the Nicky Grist Stages and then caused Edwards to retire from the Grampian Forest Rally.

"We had this intermittent misfire which was very strange," says Melvyn. "We sent data back to Germany, they checked it, we checked it, we changed a lot of electrical components. It seemed to go away, but all of a sudden further down the line it came back again and the only thing which we hadn't changed was the engine loom on the car. So we put a complete engine loom on the car, we did a big test before the Trackrod and we had no issues at all and since then, touch wood, we haven't had any issues at all so there must've been a fault in the wiring.

"There must've been a bad connection somewhere in that loom or a plug inside that, when the heat got to it, wasn't making contact and then we were having misfires on one of the cylinders. It was very frustrating to be honest because even when we changed the engine loom and we did something like a 100-mile test before we did the next rally, we couldn't do any more, but you're still in the back of your mind thinking 'is this going to come back to haunt us?'"

Thankfully it wouldn't hamper Edwards' championship as he went on to win it, but that final winner-takes-all shootout was an intense and unique affair for the team, running both title protagonists. Meirion admits he was "pretty surprised" that "nothing seemed to blow up" despite what was at stake but shares an interesting anecdote from the final service in Ulster.

"I'd been in the truck," he says, "I'd had a chat with Matt and we'd decided what tyres he was going on and then I had to go out and have a chat with Osian about what tyres he was going on but I couldn't tell him what Matt was going on. And that was really strange. I couldn't go to Osian saying 'Matt's doing this, you need to do this' because it's not fair on the other, that was the strangest part. But at the end of the day, I still think it's got to be down to the driver, he had a gravel crew and everything so he had to use the info he had. But I remember thinking then 'f**k I doubt many people have been in this situation.' But it was tough. I was very proud to win it, but I felt pretty bad for Osian and his family because it was tough [for them to lose it]."

The impression Melvyn Evans Motorsport has made is immeasurable though, so much so that Melvyn's phone hasn't stopped ringing. "We've got four Polos here and I could sell the four of them tomorrow, that's how much of a demand I've got for these Polos," he says. "We've had a lot of drivers asking about stuff for next year but I think after we've had such a busy year I said 'look, let's leave this year, get it out the way and start again in January' because you get enough of rallying after a bit, don't you!"

Indeed, you can. But once the dust has settled further and the family is round the table this Christmas, you can bet they'll be feeling quite proud of what they've managed to achieve. ■

LEARNING FROM EDWARDS AND PRYCE

2021 has been a strange season for Meirion Evans, whose own rallying calendar has been dictated around the family team's BRC commitments. But he tells Motorsport News he "enjoyed" this "different experience" and he managed to pick up plenty from working with two great drivers.

"Early on the plan I had was I might have done a few BRC events myself through the year but when I saw the amount of work and the time that had to go on, not even on events but away from events, I wouldn't have had the time to do it properly," he says. "But it was fine, I quite enjoyed it.

"The thing with working with two drivers like Osian and Matt is obviously you learn things off them as well, because every driver has their own way of doing things and approaching the way they work on tests and stuff. So for me, from a driving perspective, I can take things from each one like 'oh that's good, I'll use that' but it's always nice to work with guys who want to win.

"Even from the very first test on an airfield before Oulton Park [round one] I sat with Matt then Osh, and I just said 'it's crazy how two guys can be so different to achieve the same thing. Similar speed, but very, very different ways of getting there. And you could just see that throughout the year it was very, very differing driving styles but both, like you could see on the Ulster, after 65-70 miles there was like eight seconds between them so I wouldn't say either one was wrong, it's just the way they do it."

On the rallies Evans did get to drive he performed impeccably too, scoring his first-ever rally victory as he prepares for an Irish Tarmac assault in 2022: "All in all we looked the other day and I think Matt did seven rallies, won three. Osh did seven, was on the podium on six and won two. I did five, was on the podium on all five and won two. So for the car it's been very good for Volkswagen."

Meirion Evans has had an insight into top-level drivers in '21

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FEATURE

THE GIANTS FALL SILENT: LOOKING BACK ON THE WORLD RALLY CAR ERA

With a history spanning 25 seasons of intense drama, the World Rally Cars' legacy will endure, writes Nick Garton

Sporting glory: World Rally Car rules made icons for the ages

Origin of the species: Lancer E3 set template for the next 25 years

Toyota's Corolla was the first humdrum hatch to get WRC makeover

After a quarter of a century, the sun has set on one of the most successful formulae in the history of motorsport: the World Rally Cars.

The impact of these machines has been unprecedented, providing the foundation for rallying to enjoy an exponential growth in popularity. There have been peaks and troughs in the World Rally Championship story over the past 25 years, but the series still boasts 10 times the following of Formula E when measured by its live attendances, TV audiences and social media following around the world.

Why World Rally Cars?

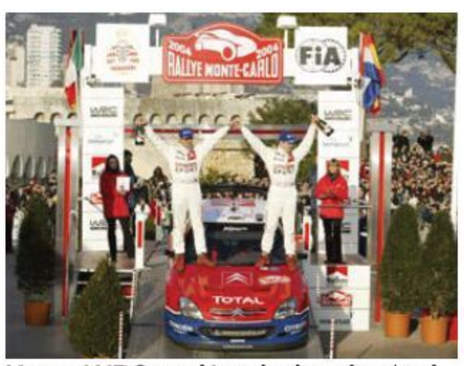
In the late 1980s, production-based Group A machinery took on the mantle of the most senior rally category after the purpose-built projectiles of Group B were ruled out. The definition of Group A as a 'production' class led manufacturers to build exotic homologation specials such as the Lancia Delta Integrale, Ford Escort Cosworth and Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution series. The cars became stars in their own right, but the cost of building and selling the required 2500 showroom models was astronomic.

When the world's economy began to tremble in the early 1990s, the motor manufacturers demanded a cost-effective solution without the need to build fleets of homologation cars. Soon afterwards, Mitsubishi unveiled its Lancer E3 model at the beginning of 1995, featuring the most extreme aerodynamics and engine technology yet homologated, which prompted the other manufacturers to step up their demands for parity.

The death-knell for this brilliant but costly era came later in 1995, when Toyota was found to have engineered a bypass on the turbo restrictor plate for its Celica GT-Four, which granted it an extra 50bhp. This legendary dodge would cost Toyota a 12-month ban from international competition… but even so, the Celica only won a single event in 1995 by using its trick turbo. Clearly this was not the only outfit with something up its sleeve. On the basis that banning everyone would be impractical, a new solution was sought.

Prodrive's David Lapworth, architect of the iconic Subaru Group A and WRC cars, recalls: "From what I remember it wasn't a very long gestation period from Group A to World Rally Car rules. I think the whole story with Toyota and the situation around Group A turbochargers and intercoolers and things was getting beyond control.

"It was also clear that the European manufacturers like Peugeot and Ford didn't feel that they could do homologation 'specials', so the whole championship was drifting into a situation where only Mitsubishi, Toyota and Subaru could really commit to building cars. We needed a situation that would allow the other manufacturers to come in with a car based on something a bit more mundane. That all accelerated around the end of 1995, when people realised that they needed to do something quickly."



Xsara WRC and Loeb dominated

The FIA's homologation chief, Gabriele Cadhringer, corralled Lapworth and his counterparts into working groups chaired by his technical delegate, Jacques Berger. They were tasked with thrashing out the what form the next generation of rally machinery would take – although this was in itself quite straightforward, according to Lapworth.

"One of the advantages of the World Rally Car regulations was that it enabled us to address the advantages that Mitsubishi had… it had a bigger turbocharger, it had a bigger intercooler and so on," he says.

"In fact, that Mitsubishi was the benchmark for the World Rally Car regulations. It was quite clear in the discussions… the best of the existing Group A cars at that time should be the benchmark for the World Rally Car regulations and that those regulations should be written so that any manufacturer

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> **"The Lancer E3 was the benchmark"**
>
> **David Lapworth**

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FEATURE

coming in could be on a level playing field with the existing teams."

Mitsubishi's Ralliart operation, based in Northamptonshire, had laboured long and hard to turn the manufacturer's WRC presence from that of a novelty addition to the cusp of potential domination. Surrendering its technical advantage would undoubtedly be a wrench, but there was a bigger picture to consider: the survival of the WRC itself.

"They [Mitsubishi] weren't obstructive, but clearly it was in their interest to make sure that World Rally Cars didn't have any additional freedoms," Lapworth remembers.

"Their position, in a lot of cases, would have been quite defensive. It wasn't easy for them; they were the benchmark, and they were the people who had managed the most extreme evolution in their homologation. And the result of that was, of course, that the Mitsubishi remained extremely competitive."

Changing the guard

Not only were the cars updated, so too were the events. In a bid to make rallying more TV-friendly, and to reduce the organisers' overheads, the FIA and the WRC's promoter, at that time the Bernie Ecclestone-owned International Sportsworld Communicators, began phasing out the traditional format of driving a route from one town to the next, accompanied by a fleet of support vehicles.

Instead, the WRC was heading towards a vision in which a centralised service park would be established as a permanent base at each event. The cars would then go out to complete a 'loop' of stages each morning and afternoon, making a much easier product for TV consumption.

The final question remaining was what to call these new cars. For too long, the sport's marketing people believed, rallying had been hidden behind arcane nomenclature such as Group 4, Group B or Group A, none of which meant a thing to everyday people. The new regulations would produce dramatic-looking cars and they needed a name that suited this visual impact. They would be called World Rally Cars, or WRCs for short.

This shorter, easier-to-consume World Rally Championship would initially be contested by four manufacturer teams. Mitsubishi was sticking with its 'Evo' homologation models and Ford, having outsourced the responsibility for its rally programme to Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport team, initially settled on a mild update of its Group A Escort Cosworth.

Toyota's Cologne-based team meanwhile stunned the rally community by turning the dumpy little E110 Corolla hatchback into the first true WRC car. Toyota's only truly global model was hardly the stuff of automotive dreams: the road car's most potent engine was a modest 1600cc affair. Yet this humdrum hatchback looked like a million dollars when it was rolled out at the start of the 1997 WRC season.

The Corolla turned into a handsome machine, but it couldn't hold a candle to the glamourpuss that was Subaru's two-door S5 Impreza WRC.

"Obviously, that look of the car is all credit to [automotive stylist] Peter Stevens," says the ever-pragmatic Lapworth of his celebrated creation.

"It came together quite quickly for us because the World Rally Car regulations gave us the scope to address the shortcomings of the existing Group A car. We knew what we wanted to achieve and, because we were starting with an existing four-wheel-drive car, we didn't have to reinvent the whole car. The Corolla had to be created from the ground up because there wasn't a homologated version that needed a few improvements, whereas from a '96 Impreza, we were able to do a bit of aero, we were able to choose the turbo we wanted to run and put the intercooler where we wanted it. There were a bunch of freedoms that we had to improve the existing car, which is why I think we were quickest off the mark because we had an easier journey"

Mini bid was over before it began

McRae and Sainz led big budget Ford Focus effort

S5 Impreza WRC became a global icon to the PlayStation generation

Seat was the first new manufacturer to take the step up to top class

Peugeot threw unlimited resource at making the 206 into a winner

Hyundai gained access to top-flight motorsport through WRC rules

because the S5 Impreza WRC was the perfect vehicle in every sense for the rallying to reach the PlayStation generation of youngsters. Subaru claimed the first manufacturers' trophy of the World Rally Car era, while star driver Colin McRae just fell short of breaking Mitsubishi team leader Tommi Makinen's run of four drivers' titles. The manufacturers and their big-name drivers delivered huge drama which, for the first time in WRC history, was made available to millions on TV around the world in a co-ordinated manner. Not only that, but also the arrival of games consoles was exploited brilliantly. The Colin McRae Rally series bestowed a cult following for Subaru's blue-and-yellow coupe among gamers.

The wonder years

This exponential growth in interest that rallying enjoyed around the world created a surge of new manufacturer-backed teams to join the fray.

In 1998, Volkswagen's Seat brand joined the fray after two-wheel-drive success, followed a year later by its Czech stablemate Skoda and the French giant Peugeot. Hyundai would follow in 2000.

In 1999, Ford killed off the much-loved Escort after more than 30 years and brought in the futuristic Focus to replace it. The Focus WRC, designed by future F1 man Gunther Steiner, also marked a step change in how Ford went rallying. McRae left Subaru to partner double World champion Carlos Sainz in a megabucks deal that was funded in part by lavish sponsorship from Martini.

Peugeot had spent a decade in the wilderness after dominating the Group B era World championship with its 205 Turbo 16. After that it won Le Mans but nobody paid any attention, so a V10 Formula 1 engine was developed – which failed catastrophically.

Under the leadership of former works driver Jean-Pierre Nicolas, the World Rally Car formula offered a chance for Peugeot to rebuild its tattered reputation. It chose the little 206 hatchback to compete with, even though the road car was so small that 2500 road cars needed to be built with elongated front and rear bumpers in order to meet the minimum length requirement.

The 206's tiny dimensions should have made it undriveable with 300bhp on tap, but at its core lay a work of digitised genius: its hugely advanced engine management, active differential locking and suspension management defied physics with computer science. The unique nature of the 206 WRC is reflected in the fact that no rally car ever spent less time travelling sideways in WRC history.

Watching the Peugeots rocket through gravel stages on a perfect racing line was as startling as the Audi Quattro's progess when it took on the rear-wheel-drive Escorts and Asconas almost two decades previously. In Lapworth's view, however, this sea change in technology was less evident than that of the budget being spent by the French squad.

"In terms of electronics, we were in a pretty good place; we had paddleshifts and active differentials. In fact, I drove Colin's '96 Impreza at Rallyday this year with its active diffs in and actually it was bloody good," he says.

"What Peugeot put into it was a level of resource the likes of which M-Sport, Ralliart and ourselves could only dream of. It wasn't really rocket science; it was just a level of resource that we couldn't

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FEATURE

match. They raised the game in terms of attention to detail and things that become achievable with that level of spending."

The WRC arms race

The initial griping about centralised service parks and running little loops of stages was soon drowned out by the excitement that the WRC brought to its rapidly-expanding audience. What's more, the series had been freed by a European Commission investigation into how the FIA went about its business, which resulted in the WRC's promoter, ISC, being sold off by Bernie Ecclestone. It was bought by a consortium led by Prodrive founder David Richards.

With a rally man at the helm and an eighth manufacturer, Hyundai, joining the fray via British team MSD, the World Rally Car movement appeared unstoppable. Peugeot had by now built up a head of steam that would result in a run of three manufacturers' championships to start the new decade in style. Toyota, the 1999 manufacturers' champion, would soon depart in search of Formula 1 success and Seat's programme fell victim to budget cuts, but that still left six works teams on board.

The 2001 season brought another manufacturer to the fray: Citroen. Just like its sister brand Peugeot, this new French squad put immense funding into the team, which was run by former driver Guy Frequelin. That funding not only paid for a supreme WRC effort, but also built an entire ecosystem that included junior rally series and driver development programmes that were overseen by rising Belgian management star, Yves Matton.

Matton says: "I was in charge of the customer programmes to step from the French championship with the young drivers to the World championship and junior championship.

"In the first year I took Kris Meeke and Dani Sordo in the junior team with the C2 Super 1600. In the end, I believe it was not a bad choice!"

The Citroen Xsara WRC meanwhile delivered the sort of driving dynamics needed to dominate. After watching Peugeot get everything right, Citroen took notes and no expense was spared in developing the car to its peak potential.

"I believe for the people who were able to drive this car once, even Petter Solberg who drove the Xsara as a privateer, he still says that this car would still be efficient today," says Matton.

"For sure, the Xsara was a high level of design of a rally car for this time. Like always it was teamwork: it was good designers, good car, a very good team principal in Guy Frequelin. He invested a lot of energy in Sebastien Loeb to try and bring him at the highest level [as a driver]. It was part of the philosophy of the team, part of the DNA I would say of Citroen… to try and be able to bring new drivers on the market that are able to fight and get to the highest level."

The old guard of the World Rally Championship was keenly aware that its sport was evolving rapidly thanks to the French teams' expenditure. At Prodrive, Richard Burns's victory in the 2001 drivers' championship owed as much to the Englishman's determination as it did to any residual competitiveness in the Impreza.

"From about 2000 onwards we wished that we could do a radical new car, but it wasn't really feasible because it was fundamental to Subaru's whole reason for being in the World championship to promote their unique layout with the in-line boxer engine and so on," recalls Lapworth.

"It was already clear to us that the 2001 car, the bug-eye thing, was rubbing salt into the wound. We had already seen, when you benchmarked against the Peugeot, that what you really needed to do was a clean-sheet World Rally Car."

The Impreza would muster one last drivers' title for Petter Solberg in 2003, when the potent combination of Loeb and the Xsara WRC was still gaining experience. Peugeot had meanwhile taken its eye off the ball to replace the waspish 206 WRC with the world's first convertible rally car, the 307 WRC. The team had no say in the matter, it was the demand of Peugeot's marketing Svengalis who ultimately paid the bills. Yet beneath the skin, the engineering within World Rally Cars grew ever more sophisticated.

Ford claimed makes' title in 2006

"I have very good memories of the first Ford Focus from Christian Loriaux [in 2003]," Matton says. "[It was] very simple and minimalist and these sorts of things. When I saw this car from Christian I was like 'woaah'! There were no cables, it was all clean, it seemed impossible that this car was even working."

The new Focus was good but not quite able to match the Loeb/Xsara package, which assumed dominance in the 2004 season. Sadly, the rise of the Xsara coincided with a contraction among the other teams. From its peak of eight manufacturers in 2000, the WRC was down to two by 2009.

"In the initial excitement, when you get a rush of manufacturers, you have to be aware that there isn't enough joy to go around to keep too many of them in a championship long-term," says Lapworth.

"You can only have so many winners, and you need to win a championship often enough to make it pay, and if you've got seven manufacturers and they are all at an equal level then winning one title every seven years isn't enough to build an exciting story.

"You have to be realistic: three or four major players is probably the most you can sustain long term, unless you get a very restrictive formula that puts in cost control and success is spread very evenly. Even that isn't guaranteed to work – look at Formula E!"

The Loeb era

In 2006, the World Rally Cars were shorn of much of their complex and expensive electronic wizardry in a bid to retain the manufacturers by trimming cost. M-Sport rolled out a new car based on the second-generation Ford Focus, securing Ford's first manufacturers' trophy for more than 25 years. Yet such was Loeb's advantage that he was able to retain the drivers' crown despite missing four rallies after breaking his arm.

The only other winners at this time were the consortium which owned the WRC's promoter, ISC. In 2008, before the economy had completely tanked, the firm had managed to offload the rights to the TV company, North One. The glossy production values and whizzy graphics for which the WRC's TV coverage had become known departed very swiftly afterwards, replaced by onboard GoPros and… no, that was pretty much it.

Before the 2009 season began, the global financial crisis and the resulting reassessment of brand expenditure duly killed off the Subaru and ineffectual new Suzuki operations. With only the dominant Citroens and struggling Fords remaining, the WRC's focus shifted towards sustainability – of the planet, that is, as much as series.

Then-FIA president Max Mosley arrived in the service park at the 2009 Rally Portugal to announce his vision of a 'World Engine': an off-the-shelf 1600cc four-cylinder unit to power all race and rally cars under his purview from junior racing to F1. Internal combustion, Mosley asserted, was dying. Therefore developing engines was a waste of time and money. The difference in performance between classes would, he said, lie within the energy recovery systems and hybrid electric motors, which would remain intellectual property of the competing manufacturers.

The idea of a one-size-fits-all engine appeared ludicrous at the time, but the WRC did indeed adopt 1600cc engines called the 'World Engine' that shared a common architecture and componentry. They arrived in 2011.

The Super 1600s: 2011-'16

Matton says: "You know, it's for sure I understand that the two-litre cars were really enjoyable, but sometimes it's a price that you have to pay to follow what way the automotive industry is evolving.

"At the end, rally is a marketing tool and at this time it was the evolution of the automotive industry [to smaller engines]. We started WRC cars in another era with another technology and we can debate whether going from two-litre to 1600cc was the best. But absolutely it was the way that you have to change things to ensure that rallying will still be there in the future."

The broad picture of the WRC remained unchanged, however: Citroen's new DS3 still held sway over Ford's new Fiesta, the French team's biggest headache proving

"At the end, rally is a marketing tool..."

Yves Matton

Mitsubishi finally adopted full WRC package in 2001

Burns's 2001 title was a triumph of determination in ageing design

Peugeot marketing demanded world' first (and only) convertible

Missing four rallies was no obstacle to Loeb in 2006

Elegant Citroen C4 coupe claimed a clean sweep of titles in 2008-'10

DS3 continued Citroen dominance into 1600cc era

Toyota took the spoils from last World Rally Car season in 2021

VW dominated the WRC in 2013-16 then walked away

In 2019, Tanak became first non-Sebastien to claim title for 16 years

Ogier and M-Sport put one over the big budget works teams in 2017

The final spec WRC Cars flew

to be how to manage having two drivers called Sebastien, each perfectly capable of domination. Loeb vs Ogier delivered fireworks, while Prodrive returned with a new challenger, in the headline-grabbing form of the Mini Countryman WRC.

"During the time that we were designing and developing the car we were very optimistic about the whole programme around Mini," remembers Lapworth. "Even now, looking at it, I think we did a pretty good job of the design and development of that car but it was never even finished."

The Minis were on the podium at their third WRC event and Prodrive hoped that this might be enough to galvanise Bavarian resolve to see the project through. In the end, the Mini ended up as the WRC's greatest might-have-been.

"We were sort of hanging in there, hoping that somehow between David [Richards] and BMW they would find some solution to find the budget to finish the job," Lapworth says. "But we had already frozen the development programme a couple of months before we went to Sardinia for the first rally. It's still a pretty good car and the feedback from customers driving it was that it was very good from the outset… It kind of felt like a massive missed opportunity."

A year later, the WRC almost came to grief. The promoter, North One, had seldom done much of consequence to enhance the series, and as the 2012 season loomed large the company held its hands up and said that it had no money. The FIA stepped in and cobbled together a season which was cast further into shadow when Ford decided to end its tenure as a full-house manufacturer operation.

Ford's marketing people could not grasp how rallying defined the brand in the hearts and minds of so many of its customers when it had won fewer titles since 1973 than Citroen had recently racked up in the space of seven seasons. Saving the rally programme, and ensuring that the Blue Oval alone would see out all 25 seasons of World Rally Car competition, was testament to Malcolm Wilson's charm and determination.

At this point, the WRC took on a very Germanic feel. Red Bull stepped in to buy the promotional rights, Volkswagen announced that it was entering the series and Hyundai decided to return with an in-house team based in Alzenau.

With ultra-successful F1 and WRC man Jost Capito at the helm, VW spent two years building and shaping its squad, including a season running Skodas in the WRC2 category, before unleashing its new car. The Polo R WRC was as clinically efficient a winning machine as has ever been seen in any branch of the sport, stemming from an in-house team led by Heinz-Jakob Neusser. With Sebastien Loeb having stepped back from full-time driving, team leader Sebastien Ogier could win as he chose, and the next four seasons were a story of utter, demoralising dominance.

With its trophy cabinet bursting at the seams, Volkswagen then stepped away. There was no decline and fall, just a 'thank you and goodnight' at the end of 2016. The rally world was shell-shocked, but to counter the gloom it was decided to let the remaining manufacturers, Hyundai, M-Sport and Citroen, take the gloves off for the last hurrah of World Rally Cars. Adding further excitement to the mix came the return of Toyota, with a team built on Finnish expertise and guided by four-time champion Tommi Makinen.

WRC unlimited

The neutering of the WRC's technology that had taken place since 2005 was reversed overnight. Active differentials returned, the cars grew wider and their suspension mounting points were altered to enable them to make their airborne antics on gravel events look like an arcade game. The aerodynamicists were unshackled and allowed to create F1-style packages with the result that, even on loose surfaces, the last iteration of World Rally Cars would seldom be heard to lift through a series of kinks and bends.

With Volkswagen gone, parity between the remaining manufacturers was finely honed. The difference between winning and losing became very simple: Ogier. Rather than do something predictable, like mending fences and returning to Citroen, the great Frenchman elected to join M-Sport, and over the next two years he delivered two drivers' titles and a manufacturers' crown to the hardy Cumbrian squad.

The spending power of a full manufacturer effort can only be denied for so long, however, and in 2019 Ogier did indeed return to Citroen as the prodigal son. However by that stage, team boss Matton had left to run the entire WRC and the Citroen C3 WRC had not aged well. As a result, the first non-Sebastien to be crowned as champion emerged from the pursuing pack in the form of Ott Tanak. Driving for the Toyota squad with its all-bells-and-whistles Yaris WRC, he would claim the 2019 drivers' title.

Citroen departed at the end of the year, stung as much by Ogier's wife referring to 'Shit-roen' on her social media accounts as it was by any performance deficit on the stages. Tanak left Toyota for a huge payday at Hyundai, which then allowed Ogier to step into the car that had ended his run of six consecutive titles – with predictable results. Ogier ended the World Rally Car era with his final two crowns.

Surviving for a quarter of a century is no mean feat for any formula, but through all the highs and lows, the World Rally Cars have delivered astonishing action. The WRC still takes motorsport to places that nobody else can reach, from the savannah of Kenya to the Arctic Circle, and it does so to an audience that only F1 can eclipse.

Whether it is the madcap days of eight manufacturers and the battles between their all-star drivers, the sheer majesty of Loeb in his prime or the hard-fought battles between M-Sport, Hyundai and Toyota in the last few seasons, it has been an unforgettable era.

"If tomorrow I have to go to a desert island and take only one scale model of a World Rally Car it will be nearly impossible – I would have to leave with none because it is too difficult to make a choice," says Matton.

"It's mainly also the memories that come with each one. If I can take two then for sure the Subaru S5 was the first World Rally Car that I was involved with in a more professional way, so that is part of my luggage, and for sure the DS3. It was for me, and is still, a very beautiful rally car and a very successful one.

Matton has now become the architect of the World Rally Car's demise, introducing the new hybrid era of Rally1. Yet like anyone who has been involved in the story that has unfolded over the last 25 years, he wants to see Rally1 restore the series.

"I don't know if it's the most exciting thing, but after the first World Rally Car we opened the door to have manufacturers without having a 'proper' sportscar in the showroom," he says.

"This is for me a really big step and it is the same with Rally1 as it was with the World Rally Cars. We will keep what was most exciting with the 2017 World Rally Cars, the speed and the performance and the exciting shape that we are now able to see on the stages. But we will also open new doors [to more manufacturers]."

It is a legacy that Rally1 should cherish.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

ARI VATANEN: A LIFE OF EXTREME HIGHS AND LOWS

Andy Hallbery put the posers to the 1981 World Rally champion, who was in reflective mood as he tackled another MN readers' Q&A

Vatanen has a positive outlook on his life

We promised you Ari Vatanen part two, because we only just scratched the surface in part one in November with his 1981 World Rally Championship title win.

It's fair to say he has been through a lot since that '81 year, and unusually for a racer he is honest enough, and brave enough, to say it out loud. His awful crash in Argentina in 1985 was life-threatening and he suffered multiple injuries, but the mental anguish and depression that followed for almost a year is something most would avoid talking about publicly.

Not Ari. In his book, Every Second Counts, published first in Finnish then later in English in 1988, he explained, head on, how he had come to the belief he had caught AIDS having had multiple blood transfusions in an Argentina hospital. In 1985 little was known about AIDS and what was known was mostly wrong and rumour. Ari still chose to explain his mental anguish in public. Today mental health with sports people is a commonplace topic. Thirty-plus years ago it wasn't.

As Motorsport News put the questions to him, he went into even further detail as you will read about being convinced he had cancer as well as AIDS but ,as ever, told with a great mix of seriousness, humbleness and humour.

Make yourself a huge flask of tea, sit down and read the wisdom and honesty of Ari Vatanen, World Rally champion, Paris-Dakar winner, Pikes Peak winner, Member of European Parliament and contender for president of the FIA.

Vatanen has lived a life and experienced extreme highs and severe lows. Yet for him everything then and now is: "Flat out. Do not lift."

Question: When was the moment when you realised the 'old Vatanen' was back after your crash in Argentina? I can't begin to think how emotional it must have been for you.
Keith Oswin
Rally journalist
Via email

Ari Vatanen: "*Who is Keith?* Who is he? I'm joking of course. Keith was there. He was the only other person who was there, and he saw it with his own eyes at Pikes Peak.

"I have discussed it with him many times, and I have tried to explain it to other people what it meant. To cut a long story short, my recovery [from Argentina 1985] was first to just survive, and then to survive my 'surrealistic mind bubbles' and to actually get to where a life made sense to me again, because it didn't make any sense to me. That alone was an incredible comeback, that I was not anymore 'Madman'. That's a brutal word, but I was a madman, because I was psychologically so ill."

MN sets the scene: In Argentina in 1985, Ari rolled his Peugeot over a jump. His seat broke on landing and he suffered multiple injuries to his legs and back and was treated in hospital in Argentina. When it was decided he was fit enough to travel, he was eventually flown to Helsinki to continue his recovery and more multiple operations, which is when depression, and – his words – 'mind games' set in.

As he recovered, he was invited to be a VIP guest at Finland's 1000 Lakes rally almost a year later.

AV: "That was the moment. Suddenly I see the light in real colours when the helicopter was still two metres off the ground landing at the 1000 Lakes in 1986. I was awake from that surrealistic nightmare, and I realised it was just a nightmare and it was not true. But it had lasted nearly a year, seven or eight months.

"From then onwards we got to Paris-Dakar, not that I felt perfectly OK, but Paris-Dakar was not a speed test

"The ultimate speed test was Pikes Peak. We were all the time slower in our private test than Walter Rohrl because we had his times from the previous year. I was a lot slower.

"We had the official practice run by the organisers, and always we were clearly slower. I thought I was driving as fast as I could. I was asking for advice. I had had extreme, extreme, extreme lack of oxygen after one of my operations in Finland. The doctors even said to my wife Rita, 'your husband has survived a miracle and he has finally come back to life from that low moment. But it seems to be that his brain is not anymore, due to lack of oxygen.' And my behaviour was like that. Everything fitted that analysis.

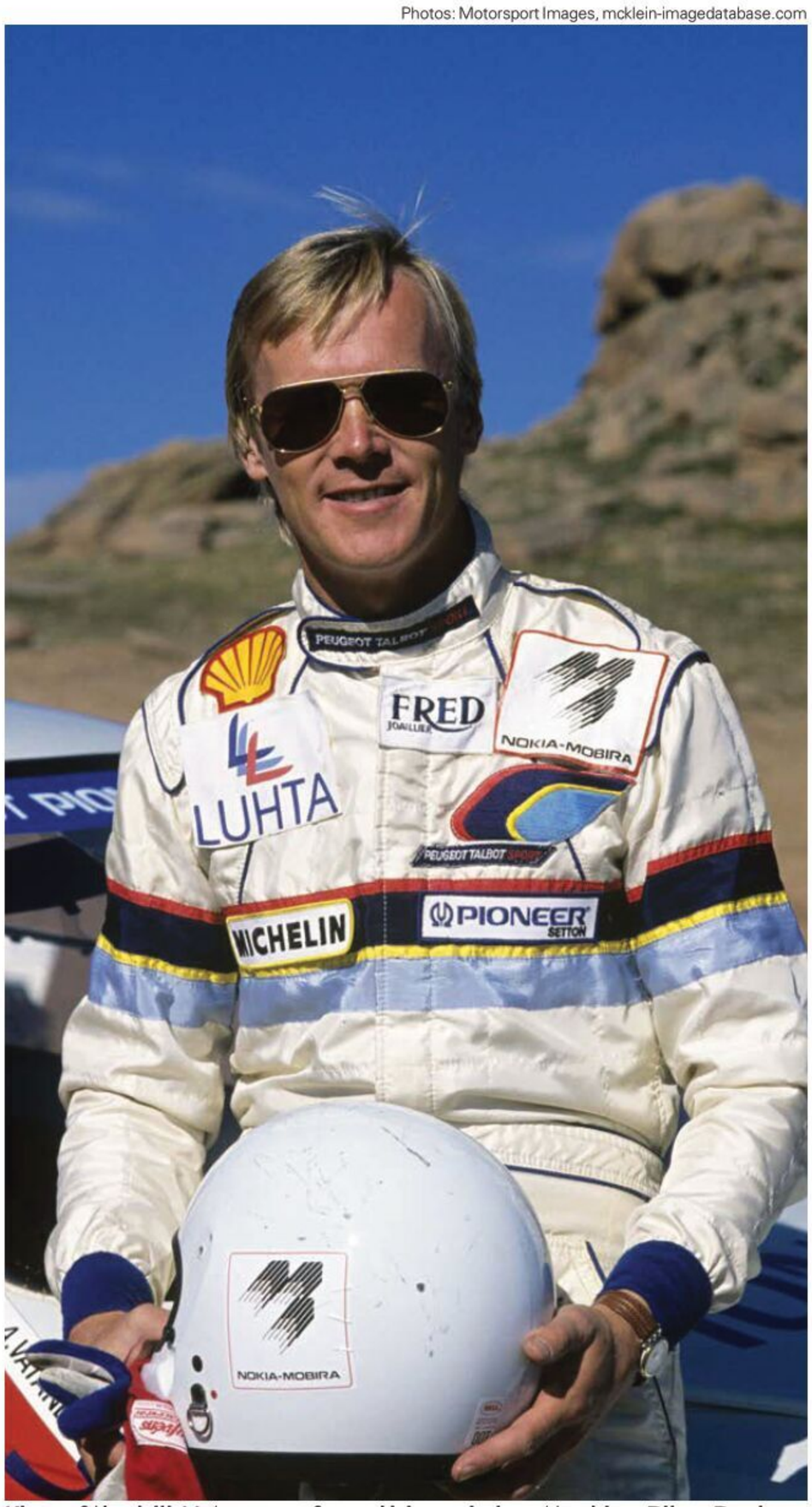
"So at Pikes Peak I was thinking then that maybe my brain was not as sharp as it was – maybe it never was very sharp! But maybe not as sharp as it used to be. Then we had qualifying. We had this idea on the final night for the car, the mechanics were already all very tired, they didn't really want to do it, but they had to work throughout the night. The idea was to beef it up all over.

"We went to the startline, no testing, nothing, and after the first few corners I feel the car is transformed, and of course that, psychologically, made me feel 'wow! Now I'm moving'. And with that, you get the confidence back, and you start driving, not only the car

Photos: Motorsport Images, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

Vatanen struggled to recover from 1985 crash

Terry Harryman enjoyed sitting with Ari...sometimes



King of the hill: Vatanen refound his mojo by attacking Pikes Peak

becomes fast, but you become fast. That's something the engineers have difficulty to realise, because you don't get that performance out of Excel. Excel doesn't notice, and it can be exponential.

"So I fly the qualifying, and wow… I come to the end, and only Keith Oswin is there at the top, and instead of being four seconds slower as I had been, I was four seconds faster.

"I know where that had come from. I know what my accident was like, and I had a realistic recovery, and how wounded I was both physically and psychologically. And I had these lingering doubts in my mind that in order to reach that ultimate, ultimate speed, it's all very delicate, it's already fragile as a human being. All the little pieces have to be together, and your mind has to be there.

"That moment is when I realised at the top of the hill… It was overwhelming and Keith saw it. It's inevitably a spiritual experience, full of gratefulness, thankfulness and a big wow – I'm *still* as fast as I was. After all that, I had recovered from my accident. I had tears in my eyes, it's true. 'Thank you Lord, this is beyond your comprehension.'

"It was so overwhelming. Then you ask yourself, do I deserve this? How can it be this good?"

Question: I don't recall his wife Rita was at the event so how was your phone call to her to say you were 'back' after he had done that run?
Keith Oswin
Via email

AV: "Hahahaha! That particular call I cannot remember! I have done millions of calls to Rita over these last 40 years. But I do remember one call, slightly less than a year earlier when that helicopter I just mentioned landed at the Rantasipi hotel in Jyvaskyla.

"It finally took me an hour at least to do the 50 metres from the helicopter landing pad to the hotel, because I wanted to speak to everyone, I wanted to hug everybody, kiss everybody, and everybody wanted to do the same to me, as I had suddenly realised I am well. They all knew that Ari was down, always down and they said he doesn't look into your eyes anymore… And suddenly they saw that the old Ari was there.

"Finally I got to the hotel, and I called Rita, and I say 'I'm well, I'm not sick anymore. I don't have AIDS, you don't have AIDS, the children don't have AIDS.' It sounds so stupid now, but it was true. We did not believe that I am well. I had gone to London already, and at that time the 1000 Lakes was at the end of August.

"Rita was already in England, and I said these very words. 'I'm well. Life will continue, it's not always what is behind us it's what's in front of us. Life is in front of us.' Everything that we thought was now thrown overboard. Now it isn't. The focus was suddenly forward.

"I was so jealous of Markku Alen in that time who had this 560 Mercedes, and I thought I had to be this modest guy, who would love to have a Mercedes like that. But then I said, no, I have to not be boasting. But then I said, 'no, I feel good'. So I actually did buy one!"

MN: At that time in the mid-1980s, very little was known about AIDS, but you weren't afraid to speak out about depression and its effects which is very popular now to be talking about. You are an honest person, and you say what you feel. I guess the question is were you afraid to say what you felt?

AV: "No. Once I had 'woken', and I realised that I couldn't even figure out what had happened to me in those months, that I could be so wrong, and how can my whole reasoning, or how can my life go out of my mind so completely. It gives you just one single message, and it becomes 'the truth', and nothing can shed any light on it. Nothing, nothing. Then I woke from it and suddenly I realised it's not true.

"And what prompted some of it was because I was in the hospital recovering slowly in Finland. I was so weak and so fragile inside, and just scared of everything. I heard the nurses… And remember I had lots and lots of X-rays taken of me, legs and back, and only then did I know what radiation means. When I heard the nurses say to each other you must protect us well as we are taking so many X-rays of him, I started to try to refuse. They would say we need to, and I would say, 'No, no no. I don't want any more X-rays.' No Ari, we have to… We don't know how your bones are, we have to. I was 'No. I will get cancer.' I was totally afraid I will have cancer, and cancer was the one thing on my mind.

"Nothing was known of AIDS then. Until then I was only concerned about having cancer. Then Rock Hudson died. He was the first well-known AIDS victim, then I looked at my symptoms and I knew I had been given a lot of blood in Argentina and I didn't know if they could track people if they had AIDS, but I knew drug people would give blood to get money, and suddenly I felt that if you even hug somebody, you got AIDS. Nothing was known.

"I remember myself and looking at my tongue because I read that your tongue would go such-and-such a colour. I looked at my tongue. Have you ever looked at the colour of your tongue? I don't think you have. I looked at my tongue and it was exactly that which I'd read. It was the wrong colour. My heart stopped. Nothing could stop my thoughts. The doctors were flying. They took I don't know how many tests, they were all negative, but still I told all the doctors 'You are lying.'

"Mine was a special case, but I told the story because, well, my conclusion was that you have to be very respectful. Who can really bang their chest and say that I'm healthy mentally? It's like drawing a line in water. Yet you can recover, like I did, just like that. And I wanted to tell my story to encourage people that you can recover, and you can come back to your life."

MN: Going back to Rally Argentina and it was a long time ago now, but do you still suffer physically from the leg or back injuries?

AV: "Suffer? No. Even if I did, it's the price you pay. How should I say it? My posture, I look like the curve in my shoulders is going down, and when I brush my teeth, I can't straighten my back anymore. But so what? No it's not worth even worth mentioning.

"Every now and then I fall, even on pavement because one of my thighs is now a few millimetres higher than the other, so with my left leg I hit the pavement with my toes and I tumble over, because my leg doesn't work like it should. The last time it cost me a brand-new iPhone, I was clinging on to it."

MN: A bit like your rallying career…

AV: "Absolutely… Exactly! Yes. Actually, that one was in Monaco. It was all supposed to be totally flat. It was in front of his Highness and his home. And I suddenly just, full of people, bang. I fell on my face. Amazingly my glasses didn't

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FEATURE

Vatanen says that Pikes Peak gave him a great thrill

break, but my iPhone screen did. All the people are 'oh, what happened to you?' But this is a very little price to pay. I'd say I'm 150% perfect!"

MN sets the scene. If you haven't seen the Climb Dance video of Ari doing Pikes Peak at dawn, it is majestic. There are a few versions of it on YouTube. It's only five minutes long, but it will take your breath away, not only Ari's commitment, but also his lack of imagination as well as his ability to drive one-handed! At a rough count the video has had more than 10 million views. Search 'Vatanen Climb Dance'…

Question: How often are you asked about Climb Dance video if you are bumped into by people in the street? By the way, it's brilliant!

Peter Armstrong
Via email

AV: "Every day! Every single day. In fact more than every day! If I don't get asked one day, then the next day five people will ask. It's incredible what impact it's had. I find it quite fascinating. This was just one session, and everybody is fascinated. But it was spontaneous. GoPro did not exist in those days, and I forgot there were cameras in and on the car.

"We were testing on this very precious road, and there was maybe only two-and-a-half hours where we could drive because by 0900hrs we had to give the road back to the road users. We were testing the car, the tyres, turbo with the altitude difference and so we paid no attention to sun visors. As I say, there was no script, like life has no script. People just catch that; they focus their attention on that one moment when I raise my hand to hide the morning sun.

"It's amazing is how so many people ask me to do photos with them… and then ask me to raise my hand… All the time!"

MN Sets the scene: Any YouTube search for Ari will also bring up the 'dear God' video from the 1983 Manx Rally. It is a legendary clip where he somehow gets through a cattle grid at full speed…with a puncture. Co-driver Terry Harryman thanked those above...

Question: I can't say how many times I've watched your 'dear God' video on the Manx, and every time I breathe in! It's an astonishing video.

Rachel Johns
Via email

AV: "It is, yes! That really was a close call, because I touched the wall and punctured the tyre, and by the time we got to the cattle grid my left-front wheel has practically no air. And as it's a slick tyre, it pulls enormously to the left, so my steering wheel nearly turned to the left, and I had to do opposite lock, and it nearly got away from my hands and my palms. But my fingers are very, very strong, as are my arms.

"Had the wheel got out of my hand that day, you and I wouldn't be speaking now! You imagine the cars at that time, and sideways in particular there was no protection, and there was a massive stone there, a pillar, and how we did that I don't know. Then you see after the cattle grid how I have no air left in my left-front wheel. And that's what made it extremely dangerous, and Terry – who was already used to *anything* sitting next to me – he put his head down and said, 'dear God!'"

MN: If you watch that video now, do you breathe in when you watch it?

AV: "You see my head goes right to left. Normally it wouldn't but somehow that alone implies what a close call that was. It is when you look at it, but when it happens, it's faster than you. You just spontaneously and unconsciously do what you do. Either it works out or it doesn't. That day it did."

MN: When you did Paris-Dakar in 1987, which you won it as well, was that event a spiritual cleansing for you as well?

AV: "Yes, it was. You also have the contrast. The contrast that rally gave… When I was ill in my mind it was incredible. I was able to analyse my previous life and my life lived up until then, and I realised why was I behaving like that, and why I had this and that attitude. And why did I need to be a falsely modest person?

"To go from Monte Carlo 1985 with an eight-minute penalty after checking in too early to win. They are all incredible victories. But my real victory was that backdrop in August that I explained. That's when I thought and realised I was wrong thinking I would die. Then I realised I won't die.

"It was like a death penalty when they will execute you at midnight, and you are strapped on your death bed and you can't move an inch waiting for your injection. You have a red telephone on a white wall. Then at five to midnight you get a stay of execution, exonerated. Justice has figured out, rightly or wrongly that you are not guilty. Then at five to midnight that red telephone calls and you are exonerated. That happened to me.

"Imagine that, then you go to Paris-Dakar. I remember it well. I was back in life. Life has started, it felt nearly not true. All that I thought was lost… finally it wasn't lost. Life was still in front of me. And that is how my second life started."

Question: What would you have done differently if you'd been elected FIA president in 2009?

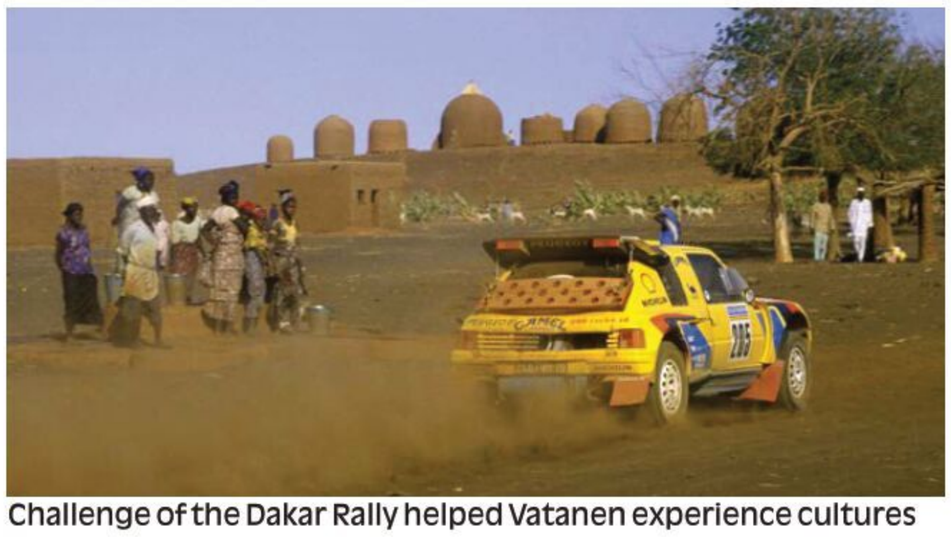
Simon Stiel
Via email

AV: "Oh…That is an impossible and unfair question. It's unfair to me, and unfair to Jean [Todt], because now we only forget what it was like when the late Max [Mosley] was at the helm. All the time there was a conflict somewhere, very often headlines, whether against Ferrari or against Ron Dennis and this and that and some other big conflict or argument because Max was good at war. He excelled in that.

"Now, since Jean came to power there have been no more newspapers, no more scandals and in a way he has stabilised and brought a peace into the federation. What Jean has definitely done well is that every place that he goes to, he goes to see the respective prime ministers or presidents in every single country, and he is always received. Always. And he is a United Nations nominated sport safety

"I realised that I still had the speed. It was a big relief"

Ari Vatanen



Challenge of the Dakar Rally helped Vatanen experience cultures

Winning for Peugeot at Pikes Peak in 1988

ambassador, and that gives him access to the head of states. It's super-important that our legitimacy of our sport is accepted in the highest political level. Jean has done a good job.

"He has his own style. My style would have been more humanly speaking, and maybe more sport-orientated, but you can't compare apples and oranges. And now with the help of hindsight…of course it would have been a fascinating job, I cannot deny that, and I'm sure I would have been good at it, and with a good team of people.

MN: When you ran for FIA president, you spent a lot of time in Formula 1. What was it like working with Max and Bernie? And did they welcome you?

AV: "Max I knew slightly better over the years, and even Bernie, I'd seen him briefly. In Formula 1 it was important for the media for me to be at the races. It was good to be seen there.

"It was hard to figure out what game was going on, because F1 is a big game. With Bernie, you may not agree with everything, but he has his own style all the time. I had some apprehension because I felt we are slightly from different worlds, but anyway they wanted to safeguard their own interests, and that is true.

"What was important for me was the Concorde Agreement. While everybody gives respect to Bernie making the cake so much better, it has to be split in a fair way."

Q: What made you enter European politics? And how much of your rallying background was a benefit to what you did in European politics?

Pietro Lundi
Via email

AV: "That is a very good question. It was really the only honourable – it was something far larger than I am, to serve a higher cause. It's more than farming; more than driving; more than being a team manager. It's more than doing business. It's when you try to contribute, however idealistic it may sound or how you believe in it, but to try to make the world a better place.

"For me it was absolutely a human approach; a humanist approach. I'm slightly on a traditional political map. I'm a modern Christian democrat. When I look at an ordinary worker, I look at someone who gets their hands dirty. And very often the left is always politics, and counter-productive for a worker. So the economy must be dynamic, and it has to be fair, and the results have to be fair for everybody. So that was my starting point.

"Having travelled and having seen so much, in Africa and other similar events, I've seen the poorest parts of the world, and actually got to know people by their names. These people are not numbers, but to know they have four kids or five kids, but they don't know if they have enough money to send them to school. In the poorest countries in the world, you still have to pay for school.

"Then you suddenly realise that father and parents…do they have hope for themselves? Do they have hope? It's a real question. Everybody, in his or her context deserves a hope, because it's dangerous when human beings are becoming desperate. They are walking across the Sahara. We cannot build high enough barriers to stop people from entering Europe or other places if they are that desperate.

"So as a result I could not have imagined to be anything else than in the European Parliament. No way I would have stood in a Finnish parliament. It had to be the European Parliament where you are more than the sum of your parts. It was as simple as that and that was the only thing.

"It was a very noble cause for me to be in politics. For me it was definitely not to be there for personal gain, it was not to make a career in politics, no it was just me trying to be like a little doctor who tries to help his patient. And for me the patient is everybody."

Question: Which car that you drove gave you the biggest 'wow' feeling the first time you drove it? The RS1800, Group B, Pikes Peak, or anything after that?

Dale Nolan
Via email

AV: "[Long pause] In the context, it was 1974 in a local rally in Finland, where I finished second after Hannu Mikkola and we had this famous quote because he had entered late. It was just a little rally, not even a Finnish Championship rally, and sometimes the stars would come.

"There were only 50 cars, and Hannu started last car because he entered so late and I was in the first 10 cars, and when we come to the end of the first special stage, it was a road I knew, but a road he didn't know, but I knew every corner because it was just over a mile from my home.

"We got to the end of the stage and Hannu asked 'Who was second fastest?' because inevitably he expected to be fastest! He'd looked at the starting list and there were no known top drivers. The marshal says to him 'it's you who is second fastest. You!' Yes, Ari won the stage!

"I finally finished second, and I sat on the same table as the great Hannu at the

continued on page 28

Making his views known: FIA hope Vatanen was courted by the press

Best friends: after teaming up in rallying, Todt and Vatanen reunited

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FEATURE

This Escort gave Vatanen an 'illegal' thrill in 1974

Playing a cute game: Ari said he was impressed by Bernie's operations

Lean on me: David Richards and Ari Vatanen reunited with Ford Escort

prizegiving, and you cannot imagine how proud I was. People don't realise how much it means to you when you are popular, if you can maybe sing. In my case it was rally driving, and he was a world rally driver and had won the East African Safari with 60-mile stages, London-Mexico, 1000 Lakes and so many other rallies…Can you imagine how much it inspired me and how much it encouraged me and occasionally I had been as fast as he was. I downplayed it because I knew the road and he didn't, so even then I didn't think I was such a good driver. That meant so much.

"Then we go back to Joensuu, the nearest town to Tuupovaara where I lived and Ali Haimakainen who helped me, was also Hannu's mechanic because the works Ford Escorts were serviced at the local Ford dealer, and he was the local dealer himself.

"Ali looked after Hannu and Timo Makinen's cars. After the rally, he put Hannu's Escort back on the trailer, and I followed him, and of course in the meantime Hannu has gone to Helsinki.

"When we come to the local service station in Tuupovaara, we take the car off the trailer… And Ali did something completely forbidden! He couldn't resist the temptation, and it was his responsibility. We took the Escort and went to a quiet road behind the service station and Ali said, 'Ari, don't break it, but please try it…'

"Wow! I'd gone from my own Ascona into Hannu Mikkola's BDA works Escort. I missed a gear! I thought I'd broken the engine but thankfully I didn't. But that power, sheer power, and I said to myself if I can drive a car like this one day, then wow…

"Then later I drive a Peugeot 205 in Corsica with Terry Harryman, the real rally version, and with full power, I accelerated… And I stopped. I looked at Terry, he looked at me, and we both shook our heads, you know? In a way it was 'look at this power, this speed, on this narrow Tarmac road…' We were slightly afraid of that power. Of course you did one day of recce and then you ask OK, why doesn't it have more power?! It's not fast enough.

"Pikes Peak was the same. That was sheer ultimate power. The first time it's a novelty. But if I pick one it's when we drove behind the service station in Hannu's works Escort, totally illegally, and had something happened… I mean what would have happened to Ali, to my friend?"

Question: I'm from Sweden and been a racing fan for more than 50 years and lived in England in the 1970s. I know you lived in Cookham Dean, in a famous road of Scandinavian racers. Can I ask who were your next-door neighbours?
Charlie Valgren
Via email
AV: "Well, 50 metres across the road was co-driver Ilkka Kivimaki. He was the closest to us. Keke Rosberg was the second closest. Markku Alen lived almost as close. Ronnie Peterson lived in that road also, but he had died already by that time, then it was Pentti Airikkala who was a little bit more in the centre of Cookham Dean, so yes, five Finnish racers including myself.
MN: Is it true it became known as 'Racing Hill?'….
AV: "Yes. Also, I didn't know who lived at the other end of our house. It was a very big house, but there was a partition, there was a fence at the far end of the same kind of the complex, so it had an entry from completely the other end.

"I didn't know at the time, but there was a famous singer who lived at the far end in the house next door. He later admitted this to me when I got to know him – I didn't realise, because I'd hardly heard of his name at the time. Who is that famous singer who would have said that? It was Chris Rea."

Question: If you could pick one 'victory' from your career that means the most which would it be? The 1981 World Rally Championship title, Paris-Dakar, Pikes Peak or anything else?
AV: "It is so, so hard just to pick one. If you were to just do it the other way around… If you *didn't* have one of them, what would you regret the most? In that case I would regret the most the World championship, so let's put it that way. Everybody wants to be World champion at least once, if possible. In that sense, you would miss that the most. Everything else is a bonus. But once you have got that, everything else, the other victories are rewarding.

"Paris-Dakar has been so rewarding, but in a different way and that maybe added more to my public position in France than the World Championship. It meant more because I penetrated the people's imagination.

"Then of course there's Pikes Peak, come on… It's just 12 miles, 10 minutes and that five-minute film literally made me more well-known than for anything else." ■

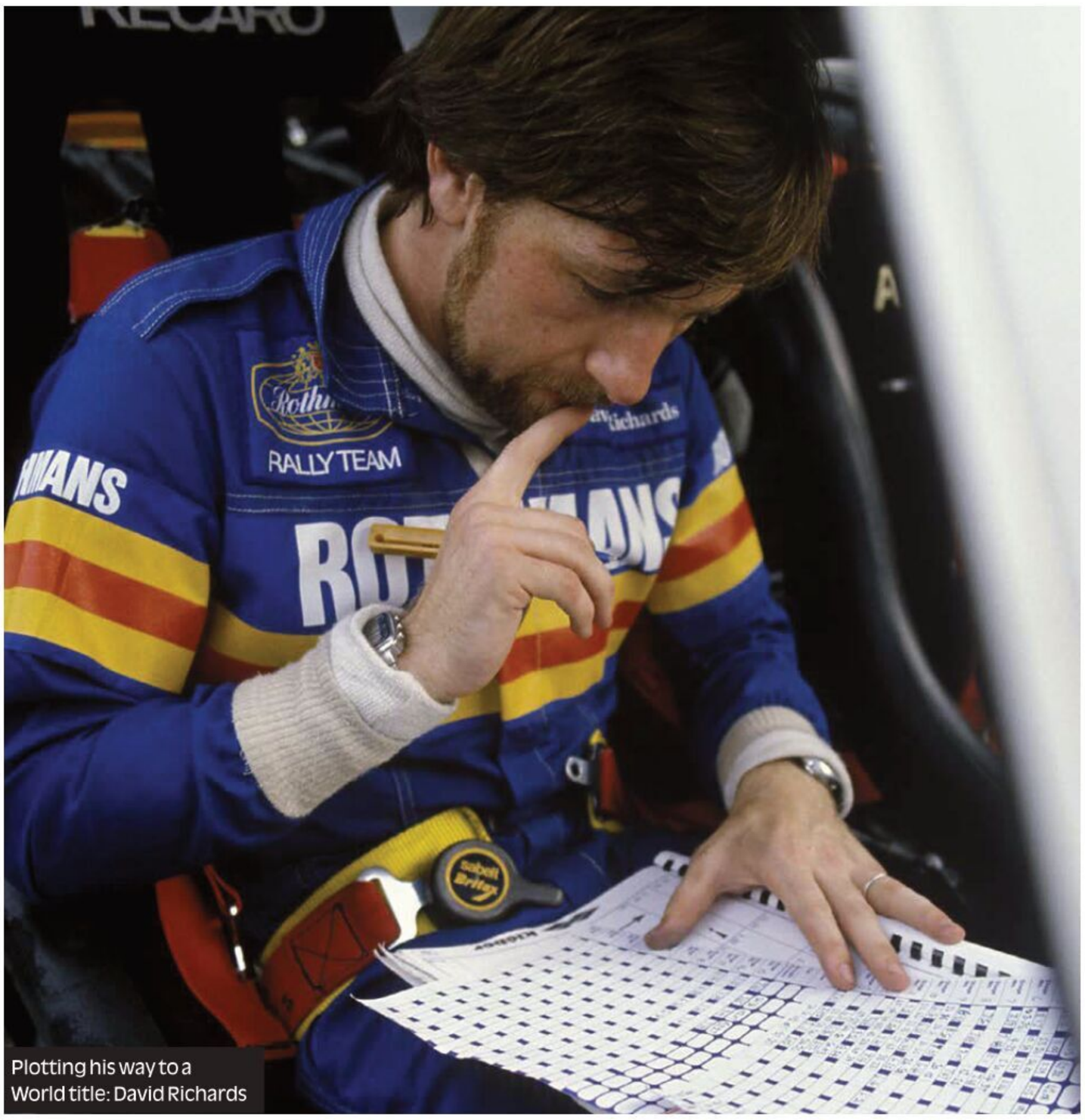
"The 1981 World title means the most to me"

Ari Vatanen

Every second counts: Ari's book

RICHARDS: TELLING ARI WHERE TO GO

Andy Hallbery listened as David Richards recounted tales of their partnership that resulted in a World Rally Championship title in 1981



Plotting his way to a World title: David Richards

Richards soon realised that the trees on the 1000 Lakes Rally always seemed to be on his side of the car...

David Richards sat alongside Ari Vatanen during their epic season in 1981 and had a first-hand insight into the skills of the man at the wheel and the trials and tribulations they had to go through to claim the silverware.

During an evening at the RAC Club earlier this year, the pair were reunited to remember that wonderful achievement. We listened in as Richards described just exactly what it was that made this duo stand on top of the world.

Question: What was it you saw in Ari that tempted you to commit to him?
David Richards: "You could tell in those days he was a great character and we had … When we did the Scottish Rally, we went all the way to Scotland in this Opel Ascona. And it was quite a long event and the car eventually had holes in the floor. It was more dangerous being hit by the stones coming through the floor than anything else. Ari won 'Man of the Rally' and we got a gallon of Scotch, a great big bottle! Ari took it back to Finland and it got lost…"
Ari Vatanen: "Yes, I didn't see my brother for six months!"
DR: "But we came back from Scotland in that Opel Ascona, and Karen, my fiance at the time, was in the back of the car all the way from Aviemore back to London."

Question: Did you enjoy 1978 and 1979 with [team boss] David Sutton
DR: "It really was David and Goliath. In those days the big teams would turn up with something like 100 people at an event with trucks and so on. If we took a dozen people to an event we'd feel quite lucky! It was done very well and done with enormous passion. It was a family affair and effort and we were privileged to be in that environment. We had the best car of the era, until the Audi Quattros came along, and we had a team that were totally committed. I learned an awful lot in that period of time. You need only a small committed team to be able to do extraordinary things."

Question: Tell us about the Acropolis Rally in 1980, the first World championship win…
DR: "That was a special event. We'd gone quite a long time without a win when you look at our peer group, like Jimmy McRae and Tony Pond.
"It was something like 13-and-a-half hours, that rally. We actually had 22 punctures on that event. *Twenty two!* On the last stage when we were coming back up, we had no spare tyre in the car. We were sitting there with our fingers crossed, knowing this was a World championship event win in the making."

Question: In 1980 in Portugal, both Rothmans Escorts crashed at the same corner. Ari's car landed on top of Hannu Mikkola's car...
DR: "That was an interesting one! That was early in the morning, and it was a cobbled road coming down the hill, and it was quite damp in the morning. I remember it well… When the brakes lock you hear this really strange noise, and you start to feel the car is going to rotate, and you are going backwards. I closed my notes and put my head down because I knew this was going to be another big shunt. We went right back through the trees… When we came to a stop, there was glass everywhere, and Ari is staring in the rear-view mirror, and he's saying 'that was a big one. A big one. I can see the bonnet in the mirror, upside down.' He thought the car had broken in half! At that point Mikkola knocks on the window and asks if us two were alright..."

Question: Your rivals in 1981 were Guy Frequelin and his co-driver Jean Todt. Did you get the feeling back in 1981 here was a man heading for the FIA presidency?
DR: "Jean was a curious character. Very, very bright guy, a total workaholic and extraordinary individual, and our paths have crossed now over many, many years in different ways. Obviously with Ari he was the team manager running Ari in the Peugeot days, and they did very well there. Then Jean went into Formula 1 and I was in F1 too, then in his FIA position, more recently we've been talking too. He's had an extraordinary career in what he's achieved. There will be people… And I would be a critic in certain circumstances, but you cannot take away what he's achieved. He's had an extraordinary career."

Question: What was it like sitting alongside Ari on the Acropolis in 1981?
DR: "It just went clockwork somehow. Sometimes you go to events and everything goes against you, other events it all just works and 1981 Acropolis was one of those events. We started Number 1, we stayed first on the road through the entire event and it just worked for us. The car was perfect."

Question: Did you sense the importance of the 1000 Lakes in Finland, 1981, to Ari personally?
DR: "For any Finn, it is the rally of

> **"We were lucky to take a dozen people on events"**
>
> **David Richards**

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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win
LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY
By Matt James
Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris.
From pole position, McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres.
He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.
Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe.
The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."
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LEWIS P1
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Hamilton left it late to pounce for his 100th win
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FEATURE

the year. The 1000 Lakes in those days was total commitment. The trees always seemed to be on my side…

"To put things into perspective, today they get two passes over the stages at slow speed, you can't go fast. We'd be there for three weeks. We stayed with Ari's aunt not far away from rally HQ in Jyvaskyla. We used to be nocturnal. They'd give us something to eat about 1600hrs, then off we'd go. We'd go once over the stages we were going to do in daylight, then we'd get something to eat, then we'd work until 0500hrs or 0600hrs. We would literally go over the stages flat out, flat out… Full speed. It got to the point where Ari had memorised the whole stage. In the end I was just sitting there. I might as well have said nothing.

"There was one particular moment I remember very, very well. It was a long stage, with lots of jumps, which are amazing. We were going down through this stage and there was a milk churn stacked on this farm by one of the jumps and then you came down to a 90 degree left-hand corner. And this jump… Ari says 'I think on the day we can take this one flat out…' I was a bit suspicious already, because I've already seen what that means! He was pretty convinced we could do it, and we practiced and practiced at night, and we probably got very close to it.

"On the day we came down that road, and Ari…I could tell there was no telling him… he's going to take it flat out, whatever I said! We came over that jump and it was quite a vicious jump, it was dark, pitch black and the stalks we had to hold the lights on the Escort had been turned the wrong way around. We hit the ground, the stalks dropped down and the lights went out! Everything went completely black. And all I know is that there's a lake straight in front of us, and a 90-degree corner. How we got round that I have no idea."

Question: How much were you thinking championship points in Finland and Sanremo?

DR: "I think I'm more strategic than Ari! Ari just wanted to win every single event, every single stage, and I guess I'm a bit more 'self-preserving' I suppose! I was more calculating. I wanted to win the World championship and we were just managing there. But Finland was a milestone."

Question: Back to the World championship, you'd been to Sanremo, and you've talked about how determined you were over the closing stages to get more than just a decent points finish…

DR: "No, no no… Ari didn't want to be beaten by a woman [the Audi of Michele Mouton]! He couldn't cope with this idea. She was leading, and she was doing a great job and she, to this day, is still the best rally driver of that time to now – or ever probably.

"We went into the last night and we weren't far behind, 20 seconds? Something like that, so we had a chance, and there was a big debate. As usual I was Mr Sensible, and Ari and David Sutton had another idea, they thought between the two of them, 'Let's go for it…' The thing was I was the one who had to sit in the car! That's the difference….

"We entered that last night, and we agreed that on the first tour, a very long stage, 40 miles or something on twisty roads through the villages, which we'd do twice, that we'd give it one go, and if we beat Michele on that we were in with a shout. I will let Ari take up the story…

AV: "There were lots of stone walls, lots of houses, very narrow. And on a left-hand corner, there's a wall, and suddenly we hit something…"

DR: "It was one centimetre wrong…."

AV: "Actually what happened was that because there were plenty of houses and there were steps into a house below, so there was an opening, like a two-metre opening in the wall and when the wall restarted it was not geometrically round and stuck out by a couple of centimteres. I was so close to it, but it was just enough for the tyre to touch the wall and that was it."

DR: "The thing that sticks out in my mind, but the prizegiving was down in the Corniche in Sanremo, and we eventually finished seventh or eighth. They had a grandstand there and everything. Unlike Miss World, they started with the winners, so by the time they got to us in eighth there was hardly anybody left.

"But there was one old boy, an Italian guy, cheering and clapping at the back. I thought 'this is very strange…' We came down and he came over to see us, put his arms around us, and in his pidgin English he said, 'You are the heroes because you had victory and you tried your best. You went for it, for the result. You didn't take the safe option.' That really resonated with me."

Question: What was it like winning the title after the RAC Rally in 1981?

DR: "It's hard to explain the pressure on you in that environment. We were relatively young guys. And all the finance behind it, all the teamwork behind it. The great thing from my perspective… When I was that 12-year-old boy cycling to Clocaenog Forest to watch the stage with my younger brothers, we watch from a 90-degree corner which for us was the easiest corner to get to quite frankly, a straight section in from the main road, and that was the very last corner of the last stage that we won the World Rally Championship on in 1981."

Question: It's a story that has everything, it's fantastic and thank you for putting it so graphically and reliving so much of it. Why was it the decision for you that that was the end of it?

DR: "As I said there was a lot of pressure at that time. It's not easy in that environment.

"Looking back now, and I look back as Ari is one of my best friends. But in those days, it was really challenging. I spent far more time with Ari than any other person, let alone my wife in that year. We were constantly on the go, moving from event to event.

"We'd spoken in the middle of the year, and we'd had these challenges of how we were going to cope with this, and I'd made up my mind. I'd lots of other ideas that I wanted to do anyway. I'm not sure I would have stopped co-driving had I not won with Ari that World championship, perhaps I would have wanted to carry on but it was very clear to me that with a young family and things like that, plus other ambitions… We were always joking about the crazy ideas I used to come up with, and I was able to realise those afterwards." ■

"When we landed from the jump, all the lights went off"

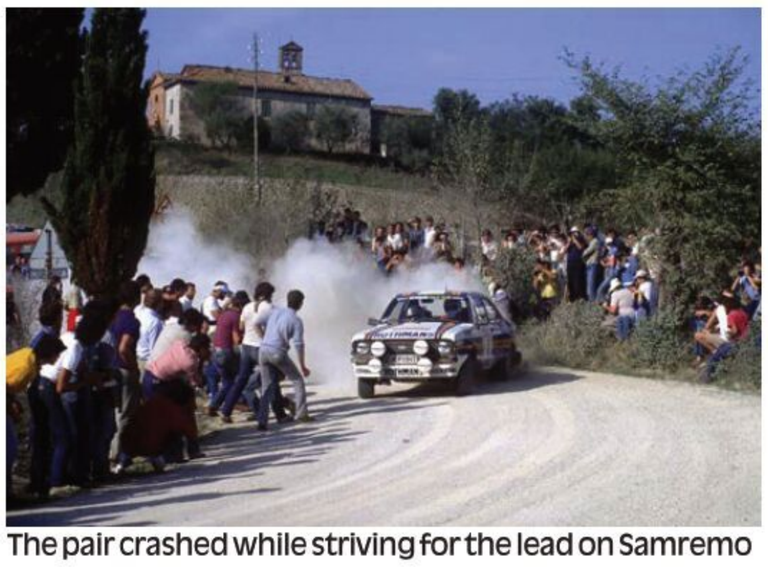
David Richards

Photos: Motorsport Images, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

The spoils of victory: The Escort carries the accolades

Portugal in 1980 ended with a sizeable accident...

Victory on the Acropolis Rally came as the duo and the car were in perfect harmony throughout


The pair crashed while striving for the lead on Samremo

The pressure is finally off: title came in GB

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THE F1 YEAR THAT

James Roberts answers the big questions after a truly remarkable Formula 1 season

The 2021 Formula 1 season was arguably the most exciting in the 71-year history of the World championship.

It was almost impossible to separate the two rivals, Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen, who came to the final race of the year in Abu Dhabi tied on points. The fact it took a controversial last lap shootout to decide the outcome was perhaps no surprise after an epic season of racing.

There were some rumblings of a protest in the aftermath, but they have now subsided. Nothing should take the shine off the season

We look back on 10 key moments that shaped the year…if you think we have missed the mark here, please feel free to let us know at motorsportnews.ed@kelsey.co.uk

"Nothing should take the shine off the year"

James Roberts

1 FLASHPOINT OF THE YEAR: Copse corner at Silverstone

F1 folk are still arguing about this one. Up until mid-season the two championship protagonists had avoided contact. Or you could argue Lewis Hamilton had got out of the way at the first corner at both Imola and Barcelona when Max Verstappen had barged passed.

But at Silverstone, Lewis wasn't going to back down.

This incident needs to be put into the context of the season at this stage. For the first time since 2013, Red Bull had won four races in a row and Hamilton had a 32-point deficit in the points chase. Inspired by a huge Silverstone crowd the British ace had taken a memorable pole position on Friday evening, but lost out to Verstappen in the first-ever Sprint qualifying contest on Saturday. He had to find a way past at the start of the British Grand Prix.

Their battle around that first lap was mesmerising but heading into Copse, Hamilton dived for the inside and understeered into Max, sending the Red Bull spinning into the barriers at high speed. Although Max was unhurt, he still made a precautionary trip to hospital.

Meanwhile – after a penalty – Hamilton scored a memorable win, but the animosity between the bitter rivals had grown substantially.

The rivals had a terrific fight for top spot

Max was taken to hospital after a high-speed shunt in July's British Grand Prix

RACE BY RACE

1 BAHRAIN GRAND PRIX

When: ***March 28***
Where: ***Sakhir***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

With Australia cancelled, the season began under the floodlights of Bahrain. And the battle between Verstappen and Hamilton set the tone for the year ahead. Max overtook Lewis three laps from the flag but did so off-track and was forced to give the place back.

2 EMILIA ROMAGNA GP

When: ***April 18***
Where: ***Imola***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Lando Norris (McLaren)

Max vs Lewis round two. Heading into a damp first corner, Max ran wide which sent Hamilton bouncing over the kerbs to avoid contact. In his desire to reclaim lost ground, we witnessed a mistake from Lewis when he ran off at Tosa. Advantage Max.

3 PORTUGUESE GP

When: ***May 2***
Where: ***Portimao***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

F1 returned to the picturesque Algarve for a second time and Hamilton took a comfortable victory from his title rival and team-mate Bottas. The biggest fight was over the point for fastest lap, which Verstappen thought he'd snatched before his time was deleted for track limits.

4 SPANISH GP

When: ***May 9***
Where: ***Barcelona***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

Once again the front row was occupied by our title protagonists and on the run into Turn 1, Verstappen took the lead by barging polesitter Hamilton out of the way. Mercedes decided to pit Lewis late in the race and on fresh rubber hunted down Max to steal the win.

WILL LIVE LONG IN THE MEMORY

2 DRIVE OF THE YEAR:
Lewis Hamilton in Brazil

If ever you needed an example of Lewis Hamilton's quality, then look no further than this year's Sao Paulo Grand Prix.

OK, he was driving arguably the best car in the field. Yes, a new power unit gave him a top speed edge. But, at no stage did he wilt under pressure. The fact he had been demoted to the very back of the grid – for a minor rear wing infringement – inspired him to respond in the best way he knows. Merc boss Toto Wolff said the events at Interlagos had "woken the lion."

Hamilton himself said Brazil had reminded him of the Formula 3 Superprix in Bahrain back in 2004. McLaren had just torn up his contract and he needed to prove to them he had what it took. From the back of the grid he won.

In the Interlagos Sprint he climbed up to fifth place over 24 laps. But with an engine penalty he started the main event in 10th. He was sixth by the start of lap two and soon on the gearbox of his nemesis. Despite Max Verstappen running them off the road at one point, he couldn't stop Hamilton claiming an incredible 101st F1 win.

Hamilton fought from the back to beat Verstappen in Brazil

Photos: Motorsport Images

Whose line is it anyway? Max and Lewis go at it...

3 RACE OF THE YEAR:
Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

The critics of this race had been vocal since the deal to host a grand prix was first announced a little over a year ago. While some will argue there is no place for sport and politics to mix, the reality is there has never been more global pressure for everyone – governments, societies, businesses and sponsors – to reform their methods and clean up their acts.

To Jeddah we went then, to discover an extraordinary 'street' circuit laid out within touching distance of the Red Sea. It was remarkable that an F1 facility had been built here in just 12 months.

The ultra-fast nature of the track, in combination with the concrete barriers meant there was no room for error. Max Verstappen set off in qualifying for one of the most blistering – and daring – laps ever driven, before he unfortunately hit the wall at the final corner.

Come the race, there was more mayhem. Two restarts after red flags. A brilliant duel between Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton in which they passed and repassed each other (not always on track) about a dozen times. And controversy when they hit each other on the back straight... It was enough to make you reach for a non-alcoholic beer.

5 MONACO GP
When: ***May 23***
Where: ***Monte Carlo***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Carlos Sainz (Ferrari)
3 Lando Norris (McLaren)
Max started second, but had a clear track ahead of him to take an easy victory. Polesitter Charles Leclerc failed to take the start after a crash in the dying seconds of qualifying damaged his Ferrari beyond repair. An off-day for Lewis who finished a lowly seventh.

6 AZERBAIJAN GP
When: ***June 6***
Where: ***Baku***
1 Sergio Perez (Red Bull)
2 Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin)
3 Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri)
Well done Baku, this was another thriller. Verstappen was on course for victory when a left-rear puncture sent him spinning into the wall. Cue a red flag and a two-lap shoot out. Hamilton took his chance, but locked up going into Turn 1. No points. Perez inherited the win.

7 FRENCH GP
When: ***June 20***
Where: ***Paul Ricard***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Sergio Perez (Red Bull)
This was a mirror image of Barcelona. This time around Verstappen made a late pitstop and hunted down Hamilton to take an exciting win, with a pass for the lead on the penultimate lap. After the heartbreak of Baku, this was "pay back" according to Red Bull boss Christian Horner.

8 STYRIAN GP
When: ***June 27***
Where: ***Red Bull Ring***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
The first of two races at the Red Bull Ring marked a significant moment in F1's recent history. Verstappen's win meant for the first time in eight years, four GPs had passed without a Mercedes victory. And this was the highest number of consecutive wins for Red Bull since 2013.

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F1 REVIEW

Masi was the man in the spotlight during 2021

4 INNOVATION OF THE YEAR: Radio broadcasts to race control

We never knew we needed to hear what the team managers had to say to FIA race director Michael Masi. After first appearing at the Spanish Grand Prix, you rather suspect Formula 1 is now regretting the decision to allow so much to be transmitted – especially as the conversations grew from requests to flat-out lobbying.

It was at Silverstone, after the contact between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen, that we heard both Christian Horner and Toto Wolff trying to influence the decision of the stewards. "Michael, I've sent you an email..." was a bizarre thing to hear from Toto when the race director is busy managing a grand prix.

In Saudi Arabia we then overheard 'negotiations' between the teams and Masi with regards to starting positions on the grid after a red flag.

But worse was to follow in Abu Dhabi when Wolff said to race control: "Please no safety car, it interferes with the race, please not."

That was followed by Horner asking why the lapped cars between the top two were not being cleared. Which soon after, were. Masi's actions then led to that now infamous one-lap restart and Verstappen's dramatic overtake to take the title.

"The FIA may regret the radio replays"

5 TEAM MANAGEMENT OF THE YEAR: McLaren

It would be easy to pick one of the two most prominent team bosses of the season: Mercedes' Toto Wolff or Red Bull's Christian Horner. They have arguably had the most difficult jobs under pressure maintaining motivation in their respective teams as the points chase has ebbed and flowed throughout the year.

But their competitive rivalry has often left a sour taste in the mouth. Their off-track behaviour will no doubt be lapped-up by the documentary film makers at Netflix, but were their theatrics all rather unnecessary?

Contrast with the calm and methodical dignity that Andreas Seidl has at McLaren. Seidl might not be the man to create headlines, but he knows how to run a racing team. As the mastermind behind Porsche's Le Mans success, Seidl has steadily transformed McLaren into a team capable of winning races again.

Strategic decisions such as a switch to Mercedes power units and investment into a new windtunnel are putting this former F1 giant back on track.

Coupled with Zak Brown's easy-going, but business-oriented, leadership, with the talented – and fun – partnership of Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo and McLaren, under Seidl is setting the groundwork for a successful future.

McLaren's day of days in 2021 came at Monza

RACE BY RACE

9 AUSTRIAN GP

When: ***July 4***
Where: ***Red Bull Ring***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
3 Lando Norris (McLaren)

While the first race in Austria was held without crowds, the second event a week later was full of fans – predominantly dressed in orange – who cheered Verstappen to his fifth win of the season so far. Hamilton damaged his car on the kerbs and finished fourth.

10 BRITISH GP

When: ***July 18***
Where: ***Silverstone***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Charles Leclerc (Ferrari)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

The return of capacity crowds were treated to an epic event at Silverstone. With qualifying on Friday night, the first-ever Saturday Sprint race, and a controversial clash between the two title rivals this was a weekend no-one will forget in a hurry.

11 HUNGARIAN GP

When: ***August 1***
Where: ***Hungaroring***
1 Esteban Ocon (Alpine)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Carlos Sainz (Ferrari)

A first-corner carambolage – triggered by Valtteri Bottas – set up two extraordinary outcomes in this wet/dry thriller. The first was Hamilton taking the restart on the grid by himself and the second was a surprise victory for Alpine's Esteban Ocon. And George Russell shed tears after a points finish.

12 BELGIAN GP

When: ***August 29***
Where: ***Spa-Francorchamps***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 George Russell (Williams)
3 Lewis Hamilton (Meredes)

If Russell was happy after Hungary, he was even more elated following the result of the Belgian Grand Prix. The Englishman's heroics in qualifying put him on the front row and when torrential rain forced the cancellation of the race at Spa, he picked up a podium finish.

6 UNSUNG HERO OF THE YEAR: Sebastian Vettel

For some F1 drivers, the only thing that troubles them is how long it takes to get from their private plane to the waiting limo on the runway. Yet despite his four World titles, Sebastian Vettel doesn't behave or think like other global megastars.

And since he has left the self-important world of Ferrari to join Aston Martin, he has been free to act and express his concerns about both society and the environment.

But Seb doesn't seek adulation, indeed he is a notoriously private man who keeps his family away from the public eye. Between the Mexican and Brazil races this year he went to visit former F1 backmarker Pedro Diniz. The pair had never met before, but Vettel was curious to understand the sustainable farming methods he has cultivated at his family ranch.

Prior to the Austrian Grand Prix he helped school children build a bee hotel in the shape of an F1 car and ahead of the Saudi Arabian race he initiated a karting day for female racers. But it was the sight of him picking up litter from the Silverstone grandstands the Monday after the race that was arguably his most selfless act.

Sebastian Vettel used his position for good in 2021

13 DUTCH GP

When: ***September 5***
Where: ***Zandvoort***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

Red Bull boss Christian Horner described the crazy scenes at the seaside resort of Zandvoort as "like being in a nightclub for three days." The orange army cheered on its hero Verstappen to a famous home victory on the venue's triumphant return.

14 ITALIAN GP

When: ***September 12***
Where: ***Monza***
1 Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren)
2 Lando Norris (McLaren)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

Another Sprint race and another flashpoint between the two title rivals. This time Max and Lewis tripped over each other at the first chicane to end their race in a Monza gravel trap. Daniel Ricciardo led home Lando Norris to record McLaren's first 1-2 since 2010.

15 RUSSIAN GP

When: ***September 26***
Where: ***Sochi***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Carlos Sainz (Ferrari)

There was a further twist in this epic season when Lando Norris put his McLaren on pole and looked set to take a sensational maiden win. Then the rain set in and his gamble to stay out on slicks failed. Hamilton won, but Verstappen nabbed second from the back of the grid.

16 TURKISH GP

When: October 10
Where: Istanbul Park
1 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Sergio Perez (Red Bull)

A cold and damp Istanbul Park forced everyone onto the intermediates, but at no time did the circuit dry up for the slick tyre. Hamilton had to recover places lost thanks to an engine grid penalty and finished fifth, while Verstappen was second to winner Bottas.

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F1 REVIEW

7 BIZARRE MOMENT OF THE YEAR: One car takes the start

We never thought the sad sight of only six cars taking to the grid at the United States Grand Prix in 2005 would be repeated – or even surpassed. But in this most dramatic of seasons, Lewis Hamilton was the *only* car on the grid for a restart at the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Rewind to the initial start and Valtteri Bottas discovered a skill for skittles as he wiped out Lando Norris who cannoned into Verstappen, while Bottas continued to slither on the wet track into the second Red Bull of Sergio Perez.

Further back Lance Stroll slammed into Charles Leclerc who ran into Daniel Riccardo. That led to an inevitable red flag. Those who had avoided the melee was leader Hamilton and behind him, the Alpine of Esteban Ocon and Seb Vettel's Aston Martin.

As the cars took to the formation lap to restart it was clear the track had dried significantly for slicks, so the entire field came into the pits – apart from Hamilton. He stopped on pole position and waited for the five red lights to go out. After pitting at the end of the lap, he sank to the tail of the field to give Ocon an unlikely victory.

Shades of the American Grand Prix back in 2005

Lewis was left all alone on the Hungaroring grid...

Russell follows Bottas: it didn't end too well

8 SHUNT OF THE YEAR: Valtteri Bottas and George Russell at Imola

This was more than just a collision between two cars, this was a crash between one driver and his soon-to-be replacement – so there was extra needle.

At the second round of the season no decision about the Mercedes seat alongside Lewis Hamilton for 2022 had yet been made. Protege George Russell had already had one chance in the top car (when he replaced a Covid-struck Hamilton at Sakhir last year) and was still trying to impress boss Toto Wolff.

On the long run to Tamburello, Russell went to overtake Valtteri Bottas, but the racing line veers right as the track curves to the left. Russell's Williams approached this narrowing gap and dropped a wheel onto the wet grass which pitched him into the side of the Mercedes – taking both out and into the wall at over 180mph.

Inevitably Russell felt Bottas squeezed him and showed his displeasure by going over to the Finn's cockpit and smacking him on the side of the helmet. "What the f**k was he doing!" said the British driver on team radio.

Wolff was equally unimpressed and jokingly threatened Russell with a demotion to the Renault Clio Cup as punishment.

RACE BY RACE

17 UNITED STATES GP

***When:* October 24**
***Where:* Circuit of the Americas**
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Sergio Perez (Red Bull)

America's love-in with F1 continued in Austin as 400,000 fans across the weekend enjoyed another exciting contest between the top two drivers in the championship. Max and Lewis disappeared out front and despite Hamilton closing the gap in the final stages, the Red Bull man held on to win.

18 MEXICAN GP

***When:* November 7**
***Where:* Mexico City**
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Sergio Perez (Red Bull)

Irritated with a qualifying snafu that put him P3 on the grid, Verstappen benefited from a beautiful Mercedes tow to snatch the lead at the opening corner. While in the grandstands all eyes were on his Red Bull team-mate – Checo delighted his home fans with his podium finish.

19 BRAZILIAN GP

***When:* November 14**
***Where:* Sao Paulo**
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)

Off-track events were getting just as spicy as those on track in Brazil. When the Mercedes rear wing failed scrutineering, that put Lewis at the back of the field. But he brilliantly came through the Sprint race and main event to take one of the greatest wins of his career.

POINTS TABLE

FIA Formula 1 Drivers' World Championship 2021

POS	DRIVER	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	TOTAL
1	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Honda	18	**25**	18	19	**25**	0	**26**	**25**	**26**	3	2	**12.5**	**25**	2	18	18	**25**	**25**	20	19	18	**26**	395.5
2	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	**25**	19	**25**	**25**	7	0	18	19	12	**27**	18	7.5	19	0	**25**	10	19	18	**25**	**25**	**26**	18	387.5
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	16	0	16	15	0	0	12	15	18	16	0	0	15	18	10	**26**	8	0	18	9	15	8	226
4	Sergio Perez	Red Bull-Honda	10	0	12	10	12	**25**	15	12	8	0	0	0	4	10	2	15	15	15	13	12	0	0	190
5	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	4	10	0	6	18	4	0	8	10	8	15	0.5	6	8	15	4	6	8	9	6	4	15	164.5
6	Lando Norris	McLaren-Mercedes	12	15	10	4	15	10	10	10	15	12	0	0	1	18	7	6	4	1	1	2	1	6	160
7	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	8	12	8	12	0	12	0	6	4	18	0	2	10	12	0	12	12	10	10	4	6	1	159
8	Daniel Ricciardo	McLaren-Mercedes	6	8	2	8	0	2	8	0	6	10	0	6	0	**27**	12	0	10	0	0	0	10	0	115
9	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri-Honda	0	6	1	1	8	15	6	0	2	0	11	4	12	0	0	8	0	12	6	0	8	10	110
10	Fernando Alonso	Alpine-Renault	0	1	4	0	0	8	4	2	1	6	12	0	8	4	8	0	0	2	2	15	0	4	81
11	Estaban Ocon	Alpine-Renault	0	2	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	**25**	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	10	12	2	74
12	Sebastian Vettel	Aston Martin-Mercedes	0	0	0	0	10	18	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	1	0	0	43
13	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin-Mercedes	1	4	0	0	4	0	0	1	4	0	4	0	0	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	8	0	34
14	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri-Honda	2	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	12	32
15	George Russell	Williams-Mercedes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	9	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16

Other scorers: 16 Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) 10; 17 Nicholas Latifi (Williams-Mercedes) 7; 18 Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) 3. **Non-scorers:** 19 Mick Schumacher (Haas-Ferrari) 0; 20 Robert Kubica (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) 0; 21 Nikita Mazepin (Haas-Ferrari) 0. **Constructors' championship:** 1 Mercedes 613.5; 2 Red Bull-Honda 585.5; 3 Ferrari 323.5; 4 McLaren-Mercedes 275; 5 Alpine-Renault 155; 6 AlphaTauri-Honda 142; 7 Aston Martin-Mercedes 77; 8 Williams-Mercedes 23; 9 Alfa Romeo-Ferrari 13; 10 Haas-Ferrari 0.

The champ: Verstappen

9 DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE YEAR:
Lando Norris' heartbreak at the Russian GP

Lewis consoles fellow Briton

Lewis Hamilton fans still reeling at the final lap of the season need not read on. But prior to Abu Dhabi there were two heartfelt moments from the year past. The first was Charles Leclerc unable to take up pole position at Monaco after his Ferrari had suffered too much damage from his qualifying crash.

The second was Lando Norris missing out on victory in Sochi. He had put his McLaren on pole and, after losing out to Carlos Sainz at the start, comfortably had the pace to take his first-ever win. With six laps to go Hamilton was right behind him and as the clouds rolled in from the Black Sea, he even managed to pull away from the seven-time champ when the rain started to fall. When asked if he wanted to pit for slicks he yelled back "No!" desperate to keep track position at the head of the field.

Four laps from the flag, Hamilton pitted for intermediates and then the rain fell even harder. On the third-to-last tour, Lando slithered wide – helpless with the lack of grip. It was even more galling for the Brit, who had to sit behind his team-mate Daniel Ricciardo and watch him win at Monza. His time will come.

Norris was the man on form in Russian Grand Prix

Grand prix racing will get a new look in 2022

10 WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2022: New cars; more overtaking

It will be hard to top 2021, which will be remembered as arguably the most exciting championship in the sport's history.

Watching a great veteran fend off – but ultimately get toppled by – a young upstart is a classic sporting narrative that we hope will roll on for a few more seasons yet. Whoever you supported, it was difficult to crown a winner, which is why the final lap shootout was so emotive. But ultimately congrats must go to Max Verstappen and Red Bull for ending Merc's dominance of the hybrid era.

One of the reasons 2021 was so close was because of the maturity of the regulations, whereas next year a completely new chassis will be used. The primary intention of the new rules is to reduce aerodynamic wake to enable more overtaking. The hope is we get an even more action-packed year of racing.

The other story line to follow in '22 is not in the Clio Cup, but at Mercedes as George Russell partners Lewis Hamilton. Will he ruffle feathers, like Nico Rosberg did? Or will he listen and learn from the seven-time champ? With 23 races and hopefully the return of old favourites Melbourne, Montreal and Singapore alongside a new venue in Miami, 2022 should have the makings of another thriller.

20 QATAR GP
When: ***November 21***
Where: ***Losail***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Fernando Alonso (Alpine)
The floodlights of Losail normally host bikes, but soon found favour with the F1 drivers. But there was more controversy. This time Verstappen was penalised for failing to slow for a yellow flag in qualifying. He recovered the lost places to finish second to Hamilton at the flag. Alonso was third!

21 SAUDI ARABIAN GP
When: ***December 5***
Where: ***Jeddah Corniche Circuit***
1 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
2 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
3 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes)
A second new venue in the Middle East, laid out on a super-fast layout on Jeddah's Corniche, set up a titanic battle between the title duelists. The crunch point came when Lewis hit the back of Max, as the Red Bull driver was attempting to return his position.

22 ABU DHABI GP
When: ***December 12***
Where: ***Yas Marina***
1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)
3 Carlos Sainz (Ferrari)
After 21 races the top two were unbelievably tied on 369.5 points each, so it came down to the decider in the desert. Hamilton looked to have it under control, then came the safety car five laps from home. Max won the dramatic one-lap shootout to take the title.

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FEATURE

DAVID ADDISON: TAKING IN THE BEST OF THE MOTORSPORT SEASON

From Eastbourne to Misano, the commentator enjoyed a varied year of on-track thrills

It's been a funny season. Dates changed, events moved (some for the better) and some became off-limits as the Covid saga dragged on.

Tests to fly, tests to release, tests to do something else all added to the usual admin of a season…

The hangover of the lockdown in 2020 was the proliferation of esports categories which made the start of the season very busy – all from the comfort of my Cheshire home. Once things did get moving, 2021 was the usual whirlwind of circuits, commentary boxes, hotels and airports.

Picking a highlight is tough, but MN editor Matt James asked me to reflect on some of the more memorable moments of the 12 months just gone.

1 British Grand Prix

When: July 16-18
Where: Silverstone

It's Friday morning. I am looking out of the window of the Abbey commentary box at Silverstone and… Woah! Look at all of those people! It is heaving…

I haven't seen a Friday like this for ages and the atmosphere is outstanding. Yes, most have been starved of real-life F1 for over 12 months and yes, this is the first proper all-in crowd for a sporting event since Covid became A Thing, but even so, this is a massive crowd.

There are happy people everywhere, enjoying the sunshine, enjoying the atmosphere and cheering on the Brits.

Reckon it's Lewis or Lando that gets the loudest response? Not on Friday. As I get all excited that George Russell goes eighth in qualifying, it becomes like a football stadium around Village and Becketts with chants of "George! George! George!" as the latest British star wins new fans.

Sunday is a two-part race of three parts. Once the race is restarted it soon becomes tame but then the second stint after pitstops becomes a Lewis Hamilton masterclass. A joy to watch.

The British fans soon took George Russell to their hearts

2 24 Hours of Le Mans

When: August 18-22
Where: La Sarthe

Well that was a mistake. It's barely come light and I have been out running up the Bugatti circuit…with Oliver Gavin.

This highlights his generosity of slow plodding with an amateur but feel my pain here: one of his strides is about four times mine and I am as knackered as an early LMP675. Things improve: Darren Turner joins the commentary team and World Endurance Championship regulars Martin Haven, Allan McNish and Graham Goodwin all join Gavin and me in taking the mickey out of the Aston ace whose historic race ride ends when the car breaks. "I didn't break it," protests DT.

The 24 Hours itself is not a bad race, especially in LMP2, and we are all suitably surprised and impressed that the Glickenhaus entry is as reliable as it is. The on-site crowd is a reduced one so working is a lot easier although Covid is now a byword for not doing things. Qualifying times on paper? Covid. Programme? No, sorry… Covid. Grrrr…

Sight of the weekend has to be the start of Friday's Fun Cup race as 70 or so of these things pour over the line. It's a never-ending stream of them so we retreat the village and find a bar. Ah, look. Belgian beer. Huzzah!

The Glickenhaus cars were a surprise at the Le Mans 24 Hours

Photos: GTWorld Challenge Europe, Motorsport Images, Colin Casserley

3 BriSCA F1 Semi-Final

When: August 7
Where: Skegness Stadium
It's another F1 event. Except, for Lewis Hamilton, substitute Tom Harris and for Lando Norris it's Mat Newson and George Russell is Ben Riley.

It's BriSCA F1 night and the second semi-final. Most of the stars are here although they can't catch Harris in the semi itself, but the racing and sound of a full field of cars is outstanding. There is nothing quite like them in the UK and when there is a big field like tonight, it's unmissable.

There's plenty of action in the Saloon Stock Cars as well with a noise akin to two skips colliding as they bounce down the home straight. It's a busy night at Rob Speak's circuit with 16 races all in all and it's action all the way...and it's keeping me busy in the shared race control/commentary box.

GT ace Ben Barnicoat pops up to say hello as he is here to cheer on his mate Jordan Falding, Jade Edwards (who is here to cheer on brother-in-law Simon Traves) gets dragged into presenting trophies to the winners and berates me for it: "I only came for cheesy chips..."

I leave at just before midnight to head to Snetterton and British GT – and get done by a speed camera. Peanuts!

The BriSCA F1 boys and girls brought the noise

4 Renault Clio Cup Europe

When: October 1-2
Where: Paul Ricard
It's 1900hrs and the October light is fading. I am in a commentary booth in an outside broadcast truck and outside the first Renault Clio Cup Europe race is about to start.

It's to be 25 minutes plus one lap and will be dark by the time it ends. Clios. Dark. What could go wrong? Truth be told, this championship has exceptionally good driving standards. Yes, there are occasional taps and touches but the swift justice makes sure everyone is on good behaviour.

The championship has developed into a fight between two old-stagers of the Clio paddock, Nicolas Milan and David Pouget. Both run their own teams and have a fleet of customers to look after.

All bar one of the 25 starters make it to the finish and three-tenths split winner Milan from Pouget after a fabulous race that has a big gaggle all vying for the lead. If you want to see how a one-make championship should be with close racing but proper driving standards, look here. All the races have been dramatic and the championship will go down to the final weekend in Barcelona where Milan will prevail. The safety car driver nods off, bored, unloved, under-used...

Clios in the dark at Paul Ricard

5 GT World Challenge Europe

When: June 19-20
Where: Zandvoort
Just occasionally there are surprising delights in this job. For every 10 wooden huts with a leak and a poor view, there is a box like this. I am in a converted hospitality suite. There are leather armchairs and sofas. And a bar. And it is stocked with beer and wine.

Some cars are driving around over there – but there is wine and beer. This is great. Oh, yes, to business. Friday ends early when biblical rain absolutely drenches anyone stupid enough to be outdoors but the real sufferers are those needing to use the tunnels with water waist height by the end of the evening.

Circuit staff have to work all night to pump away water but the track is usable for Saturday, only for more rain to come. Zandvoort is a great circuit, and its new banking improves the racing by offering another line, especially at the Hugenholz-bocht. And with Covid dramas rearing their heads, I am at the circuit while fellow commentator John Watson is in Blighty doing it remotely, which makes for an unusual dynamic. See if you can spot the join... Disappointingly, the hotel doesn't serve Jenever, that ultimate Dutch spirit. Happily, Schiphol Airport does.

Zandvoort was hospitable for Addison

Sportscars at Oulton Park is always a real thrill

6 British GT Championship

When: September 11-12
Where: Oulton Park
It's 0900hrs and I am bleeding. My feet hurt. Speedworks boss Christian Dick, who claims to be a friend, suggested that we ran to Oulton this morning, so we have completed a half marathon and now face a day at work.

Bacon sandwich number one doesn't touch the sides. Nor does the second. British GT at Oulton is always a bit heart-in-mouth, as they are big cars for a circuit that is not the widest and race two is wet which makes life even more troublesome.

Despite all of that, the two GT races are excellent and are proper races with battles and overtaking rather than places changing through accidents (the main drama being Andrew Howard's sizeable off in qualifying the day before) and the supporting GB3 races are equally dramatic as the weather has an effect and Zak O'Sullivan's championship hopes almost come unstuck.

There is a bit of a shambles in the Caterham race when a red flag is shown and then a chequered but the drivers are allowed to change tyres... even though the race is over! A chequered flag is the end of a race, surely? Some seem to believe otherwise. Drive home...

7 Spa 24 Hours

When: July 30-August 1
Where: Spa-Francorchamps
I've been here for a week already with British GT taking place in dramatic fashion and then the 24 Hours weekend kicking in. Apart from a brutal Covid test up my hooter every third day, the target for the nurse being to touch my brain, life is good.

The majority of the Carrefour's stock of Belgian beer is safely on Hay Fisher's outside broadcast truck ready to head to the UK and Spa is full of GT cars. True, the team hospitality open to the media is a victim of Covid but there is a crowd allowed in this year if only small.

The race isn't a stunner but it has one of the best last-gasp wins when the dominant Ferrari with Alessandro Pier Guidi at the wheel has to make an extra, lead-losing, pitstop for wets as the rain finally comes. Round the outside at Blanchimont with less than 10 minutes to go, Pier Guidi takes the lead. Messers Addison and John Watson have eyes out like chapel hat pegs. Seriously impressed.

Spa always provides...beer

8 British Touring Car Championship Finals Day

When: October 23-24
Where: Brands Hatch
There is always something special about British Touring Car Championship Finals Day and unlike last year, we are part of it. No longer marooned in our TV compound, Tim Harvey and I are out and about and feeling more connected to the showdown than in 2020. There is a feeling of inevitability about Ash Sutton winning the title for a third time, but Colin Turkington is in feisty mood and so, too, are the others either vying for a race win or for third in the championship.

It's the end of the season but the end of an era as well. No more will we have the current NGTC-style car as hybrid technology is set to move into town in 2022 and so a lot of what teams and drivers have learned will be no longer relevant. It has been a rule set that has done the BTCC proud and continues to do so for three more races. At the end of the day, it's a triple Sutton as Ash confirms himself as one of the greats of the modern age.

Sutton signed off an era with his touring car title

DAVID ADDISON'S WORLD TOUR 2021

WHEN	TRACK	EVENT
January 24	Hungaroring	esports
January 30	Brands Hatch	esports
February 6	Donington	esports
February 7	Nurburgring	esports
February 13	Oulton Park	esports
February 20	Snetterton	esports
February 21	Le Mans	esports
February 27	Croft	esports
March 6	Silverstone	esports
March 7	Jarama	esports
March 13	Silverstone	esports
March 20	Brands Hatch	esports
March 21	Oulton Park	esports
March 28	Snetterton	esports
March 28	Kyalami	esports
April 3	Donington Park	Masters Historic Festival
April 4	Brands Hatch	esports
April 10	Oulton Park	Classic Sports Car Club
April 11	Silverstone	eSports
April 22	Silverstone	BTCC media day
April 25	Donington	esports
May 8-9	Thruxton	BTCC
May 19	Arlington	Short oval
May 22	Ipswich	Short oval
May 23	Brands Hatch	British GT
May 28-30	Paul Ricard	GT World Challenge Europe
June 12	Ipswich	Short oval
June 13	Snetterton	BTCC
June 19-20	Zandvoort	GT World Challenge Europe
June 26-27	Silverstone	British GT
July 2-3	Misano	GT World Challenge Europe
July 8-11	Goodwood	Festival of Speed
July 16-18	Silverstone	British Grand Prix
July 24-25	Spa	British GT
July 30 -August 1	Spa	GT World Challenge Europe 24 Hours
August 7	Skegness	Short oval
August 8	Snetterton	British GT
August 13	Armadale	Short oval
August 14	Lochgelly	Short oval
August 15	Knockhill	BTCC
August 18-22	Le Mans	24 Hours
August 28-29	Thruxton	BTCC
August 30	Belle Vue	Short oval
Sep 3-5	Nurburgring	GT World Challenge Europe
Sep 11-12	Oulton Park	British GT
Sep 18-19	Croft	BTCC
Sep 25	Northampton Shaleway	Short oval
Sep 26	Silverstone	BTCC
Oct 1-2	Paul Ricard	GT2 European Series
Oct 9	Leicester Speedway	Short oval (abandoned)
Oct 10	Donington Park	BTCC
Oct 16-17	Goodwood	Members' Meeting
Oct 23	Arlington	Short oval
Oct 24	Brands Hatch	BTCC
Oct 28-31	Misano	Lamborghini Super Trofeo
Nov 13-14	Barcelona	GT-CER

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GETTING OVER THE LINE

TECHNICAL COLUMN PROVIDED BY WITHAM MOTORSPORT – DISTRIBUTORS OF MOTUL AUTOMOTIVE LUBRICANTS

The Duke of Richmond looks back over a year when the classic venue brought motor racing back into the spotlight

Charles Gordon-Lennox. The 11th Duke of Richmond and also 'Mr Goodwood'. He is the man who, in 1993, started the Goodwood Festival of Speed on his family's estate in the West Sussex countryside.

Since then, Goodwood's involvement in the cars and motorsport scene has grown exponentially. In 1998, racing returned to Goodwood for the first time since the closure of the racing track in 1966.

That was the start of the Revival, and the beginning of one of the world's largest historic motorsport events. We spoke to the Duke of Richmond at the Revival in 2021 as he reflected on a year when the track roared to motor racing engines once more.

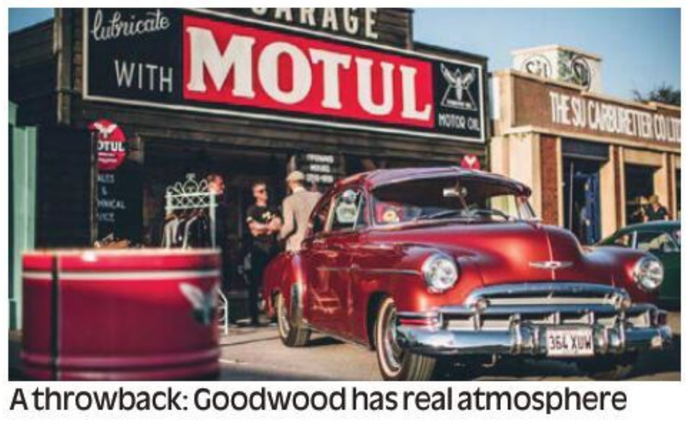
The racing stars and breath-taking cars battle for every inch of Tarmac at the Revival meeting

Question: How would you describe the Goodwood events, such as the Revival, for someone who has never been there?
Duke of Richmond: "It's like taking part in your own movie. It's very much a shared experience. The racing is unbelievably competitive [at the Revival and the Members' Meeting], and we have this backdrop of the best historic racing in the world. And this unbelievable social scene that's going on with everyone dressed up. Everyone looks incredible and is having real fun. It's a very unusual experience, which everyone is sharing and feels they're part of."

Q: You have a big passion for classic cars and several unique ones. What does your collection look like?
DoR: "Oh, it's not very grand at all. I have a few interesting ones. I very much like American cars. I have some nice Hot Rods from Bonneville. I have a nice Lancia Aurelia, a nice old Rolls-Royce and a lovely AC my grandfather designed. He was a very good racer and designer in the 1930s. So quite a few family cars that have been around for a while which he designed and built."

Q: Do they get any daily use?
DoR: "Yes, I use them a bit. We take the old Rolls-Royce shooting a lot. So when we have shooting parties we take that out. It's a lovely old 'Woodie' it's called. It has three rows of seats. It's perfect for the shoot. Everyone loves it. And it's much more interesting than taking out a modern vehicle."

The Duke of Richmond has a classic car collection



A throwback: Goodwood has real atmosphere

Q: You are the owner of the first-ever Ferrari 250 GTO, is that right?
DoR: "I could have been [laughs]. It wasn't the first GTO, but it was Stirling Moss's most famous car. There are two of them actually. It belonged to a friend of mine. It was the car Stirling won the TT in here at Goodwood. It played a big part in the Stirling Moss Trophy at the Revival. Annoyingly, I turned it down at the time. It's not in my collection, and I wish it was."

Do you use Motul products in your cars? Are you quite hands-on?
DoR: "I wish I was [hands on]. I want to make sure they're all properly looked after and I have a great team looking after them. Motul Classic is great. For all these much older cars I have, it's the perfect product."

Motul is a supporter of the Goodwood Revival

Q: What does it mean for you to have Motul as a principal partner of the Goodwood Revival?
DoR: "It's a perfect fit for us. It's a great brand, a family company, and it fits very well with everything we're trying to do here and our whole ethos of the event. And in terms of the brand and the style of the brand and the way it all looks and feels, we're all completely on the same page. We want to work with people who get what we're trying to do. And Motul does all that perfectly."

Q: Where do you think the world of classic motoring is going and where do you see the future?
DoR: "It has a great future. A different future. People will still love these cars. They are very sustainable. They've been reused, rebuilt, reused, rebuilt. All these old racing cars keep coming back and they don't owe anyone anything. They are beautifully made, they last. You don't want to throw them away. They have a very good future in terms of sustainability. It will be a bit like horses, where these cars become more of a hobby and a leisure activity."

"For all these much older cars I have, Motul's the perfect product"

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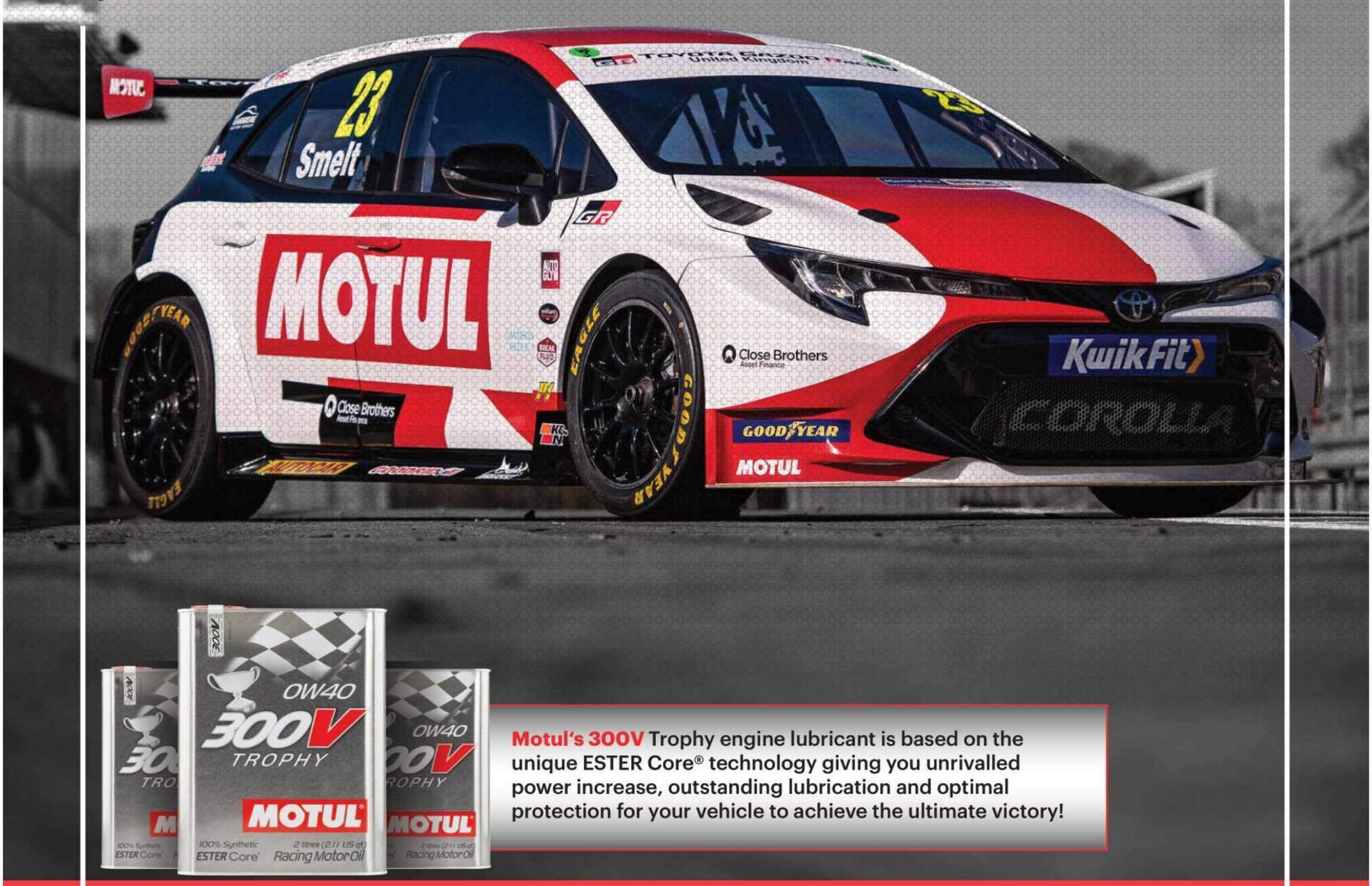

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QUIZ

MOTORSPORT NEWS CHRISTMAS QUIZ

The 2021 year packed in plenty of action on the circuits and stages at home and abroad. But how much of it can you remember? Here for some festive fun are Motorsport News's Christmas teasers

International racing

1: How many more laps did Max Verstappen lead than Lewis Hamilton during the 2021 Formula 1 season: 155, 255 or 355?

2: How many rounds ever included on the 2021 F1 calendar were cancelled?

3: How many drivers won F1 races in 2021?

4: How many drivers were in title contention at the start of the final double-header meeting of the 2020-21 Formula E season in Berlin?

5: Name the driver trio that lost Le Mans 24-Hour LMP2 victory this year when their car stopped on the final lap?

6: And what was the margin of victory in this year's Le Mans LMP2 race?

National racing

7: Name the youngest and oldest drivers that competed in the British Touring Car Championship this year.

8: How many entries took more than one overall race win in British GT this season?

9: Out of the nine British GT races this season, in how many did Dennis Lind take fastest lap?

10: Which country is British Formula 4 racer Matias Zagazeta from?

11: What was unusual for Ginetta team Alastair Rushforth Motorsport when it competed at Snetterton in August?

12: Why was the Brands Hatch meeting in June especially memorable for BTCC racer Andy Neate?

International rallying

13: How many outright stage wins did M-Sport take in the 2021 World Rally Championship?

14: Name the all co-drivers who sat with M-Sport driver Gus Greensmith this season.

15: Who set the greatest number of fastest stage times in this year's World Rally Championship?

16: Which World Championship round features the Oittila stage?

17: Who won the final stage of the 2021 World Rally Championship season at Monza?

18: How many drivers won rounds of the European Rally Championship in 2021?

National rallying

19: How many timed stages were there in this year's British Rally Championship?

20: How many drivers won a round of the British Rally Championship in 2021?

21: Which drivers are leading the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship going into 2022?

22: How many drivers who finished in the top 10 of the Roger Albert Clark were driving Ford Escorts?

23: Who won the Mull Rally outright in 2021?

24: Whose record did David Bogie eclipse on the Scottish Rally to become its all-time most successful driver?

Picture round

25: Who is making a starring appearance in the Formula Ford Festival?

27: Who drove for Motorbase in Snetterton's BTCC round?

29: What was the order of these three in the final F1 championship table?

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, Rachel Bourne

26: Name the pair celebrating in Ulster

28: Who is this starman young American?

30: Whose eyes have it?

Answers to be published in the January 6 edition of Motorsport News

Caption competition

Send your best captions to graham.keilloh@kelsey.co.uk and we'll publish the funniest in our January 13 edition!

Cartoon Caption competition

Send your best captions to mikestokoe@gmail.com and we'll publish the funniest in our January 13 edition.

The winner will receive the original cartoon framed and signed by Mike Stokoe.

Good luck and have a very Merry Christmas.

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

Giancarlo Baghetti has his place in motorsport folklore

Giancarlo Baghetti was born on Christmas Day in 1934. He's not the best-known name in motorsport history, but he has a unique place in it as the only person to have won their first-ever Formula 1 World championship grand prix.

This is unless, for the pedants, one includes Giuseppe Farina in 1950's British Grand Prix, which was the first World championship grand prix for everyone, or you include that notorious statistical quirk that the Indianapolis 500 was part of F1's championship in the 1950s...

Yet Baghetti in 1961's dominant 'sharknose' Ferrari won his first points-paying grand prix in the truest sense, in that year's French Grand Prix at Reims. It's a feat none has been able to match, despite Jacques Villeneuve's best efforts. Furthermore Baghetti won his first three F1 races, as Reims followed two non-championship victories at Syracuse and Naples. As intimated though it never got nearly so good again for Baghetti, as there were only a handful more F1 races participated in and just a couple more points-scoring finishes.

Thanks to YouTube there's five minutes of fantastic colour footage that lets you step back to a bright Reims pits for Baghetti's day of days, as the cars scream past on one of the circuit's famous long straights

Unless you're fluent in French the bulk of the narration won't mean much, though you'll be able to pick out the names mentioned and there's no shortage of significant ones. It's all at: youtube.com/watch?v=C0TUYbXgq_s or via searching: 'GP F1 France 1961'.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

Sky Sports F1 today and tomorrow pays tribute to new Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen by showing the races he won this year (apart from Spa, for reasons that should be obvious). Today (Thursday December 23) from 1100hrs there's, all in full, the Emilia Romagna, Monaco, France, Styria and Austria races, while tomorrow from the same time it's the Netherlands, USA, Mexico and Abu Dhabi.

While if you so choose you can, still on Sky Sports F1, spend Christmas Day poring over Abu Dhabi's notorious title-decider weekend session by session, starting at 1000hrs with first practice.

ITV has a two-hour review of the British Touring Car Championship season just passed at 0750hrs-0950hrs on ITV4 on Christmas morning if you're up early to open your presents. And if you're up really early to see if Santa's been good to you, there's also some Goodwood action beforehand on ITV4 with Revival highlights at 0610hrs-0700hrs followed by the best of the Festival of Speed at 0700hrs-0750hrs. The BTCC review is shown again on ITV1 late on Boxing Day at 2350hrs-0130hrs.

ITV4 on Boxing Day as usual offers a Sunday-morning motorsport fix with Motorsport Mundial at 0625hrs-0650hrs promising 2021's best racing moments then there's Motorsport UK at 0715hrs-0810hrs with Porsche Carrera Cup GB and Ginetta Junior action from Silverstone.

Eurosport 2 on Christmas Eve has a review of the Formula E season just completed, shown at 1100hrs-1200hrs. While Premier Sports 2 this Monday (December 27) has another chance to watch the best of the Bathurst 1000 at 0800hrs-1000hrs.

Graham Keilloh

A full rerun of many races, including Mexico, are on air

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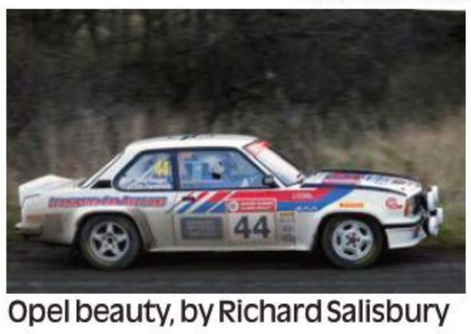
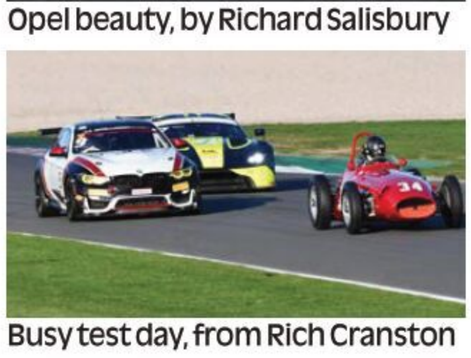
ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

There is a rally car in there somewhere, promises Ben Lawrence

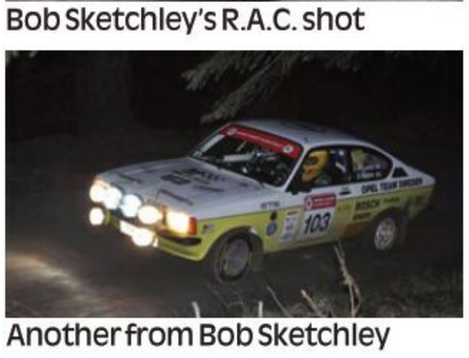


Opel beauty, by Richard Salisbury

Bob Sketchley's R.A.C. shot



Busy test day, from Rich Cranston



Another from Bob Sketchley

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We look back on the short oval hits of 2021

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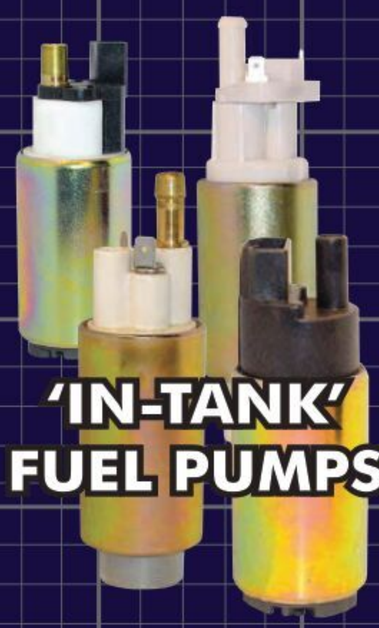

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1996, 42352 miles, £39,995. Esprit V8. 3.5 litre V8 engine with 5 speed gearbox. This fine example has an excellent service history and really needs to be seen to be fully appreciated. Please call 01234750205, East of England. (T)
111722

MORGAN PLUS 8

1986, £32,500. Plus 8 Race Car. Built to Class B (now J) Morgan Challenge Regulations. This well known, reliable car has been driven by Andy Green for the last 20 years in over 200 races. She is a front running car with many class wins, lap records and twice Class B Championship winner. Last raced at VSCC Spring Start 2019 Silverstone Nat (class record) lap time 1-04-78. Please call 01189 831200, South East. (T)
111744

MG MGA

1960, 55000 miles, £28,995. Progressively developed over the past few years, on offer is this lovely MGA Coupe finished in Works livery. The current owner has spent a small fortune getting the car to this extremely high standard and it now drives and handles as well as it looks. The uprated 'B' series engine is an instant starter and delivers impressive performance through the modern Ford 5-speed gearbox, a vast improvement over the original. Please call 01189 884774, South East. (T)
111870

PORSCHE 911

2001, £49,995. The 996 was supplied new by JCT Brooklands finished in Basalt Black Metallic with Graphite Grey full leather upholstery and has covered 89000 miles from and has had just three owners. Optional Equipment with the car includes leather package, heated seats, leather sports seats, leather sunvisors, mirrors in both visors, rear leather centre console, leather steering wheel column casing, and more. Please call 01944 758000, Yorkshire and the Humber. (T)
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PORSCHE 911

2003, £19,995. The 911 has covered 68500 miles from new and has driven faultlessly to us from Scotland, coming to us as a part exchange for an older classic Porsche. The car comes with an impressive service history, spare keys, and all its originals manuals in its Porsche leather wallet. Please call 01944 758000, Yorkshire and the Humber. (T)
111490

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2018, 10010.00 miles, £52,495. 2018 718 S, Beautiful low mileage 718 S in Sapphire Blue, FSH and about as well optioned an example as you will find, including PDK, Sport Chrono, PASM, PDLS+, heated black leather seats, Sport Exhaust painted blackr, and plenty more, in perfect condition and Sold with 4 season tailored outdoor car cover. Please call 07885679151, North West.
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TVR CHIMAERA

1997, 48307 miles, £17,995. 4.0 Litre. Only 4 owners from new. Less than 50k miles covered. In BMW Boston Metallic Green with cream seats and green carpets. Green Hood. Last owner had it for 16 years. Extensive service history with TVR specialists Prestige Performance in Melton Mowbray looking after it for most of its life. Please call 01636 812700, East Midlands. (T)
111887

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF

2015, 60000 miles. Stunning Tornado Red Golf R with contrasting two tone interior. Covered 74k from new with good service history and mot to May 2022. Please call 02879633011, Ireland.
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VOLKSWAGEN TOUAREG

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